Collaboration between academics and library staff: A comparative study of two universities in Australia and Vietnam

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Monash University in 2016
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Abstract

This research is set in the field of library and information science. It aimed to explore the nature of the collaborative relationship between academics and library staff in universities through the theoretical lenses of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and duality of technology theory (Orlikowski, 1992a).

The main research objectives were:
- To identify characteristics of collaborative relationships between academics and library staff, and to differentiate between more and less effective forms of collaboration in different situations and contexts;
- To elucidate the factors that constrain and enable collaboration between academics and library staff, including the role of socio-cultural factors, professional boundaries, and information technology;
- To develop a theoretical framework of collaboration between academics and librarians.

The scope of this research is limited to collaboration between academics and library staff in areas of teaching, learning, student academic and research skills development, and library research projects. It does not include data on the areas of research support related services such as bibliometrics, data management, publishing or research infrastructure.

The research used a multiple embedded case study design to study collaboration between academics and library staff in two universities: one in Australia, and one in Vietnam.

Collaboration at the Australian university was more structured and reached a wider scope of practice than its Vietnamese counterpart, but both universities’ governance systems lacked an institution-wide focus, development strategies and action plans for collaboration. There was little in the way of intersecting structures, shared missions or tasks that required library staff and academics to work together. The universities provided an imbalanced resourcing structure to support the implementation of collaboration frameworks and policies. Strategies for developing collaboration were insufficient, since libraries focused on collaboration in teaching rather than research, while faculties displayed a more research-focused orientation. Moreover, academics and library staff both faced challenges in terms of multiple roles, particularly in the case of the academics. Levels of collaboration therefore varied according to academics, faculties, libraries and campuses, but success was mainly based on relationships between participants.

Both universities faced similar challenges in terms of government funding reduction, resource constraints, imbalanced collaboration structures, issues of power asymmetries, insufficient understanding of librarians’ roles, and technological issues. The situation at the Vietnamese university was harder due to its higher bureaucratic and rigid organisational structure, lower levels of development of infrastructure and facilities, limited budget, low income, and a larger social divide between academics and library staff.

Differences in work culture between academics and librarians could create frustration. Academic culture emphasised a more independent working style and individualistic focus whilst library culture was more collaborative and responsive, but also more structured and detail-focused, emphasising the value of collective decisions and teamwork. In comparison with the Australian university, the work culture of both academics and library staff in the Vietnamese university was more strongly influenced by leaders’ work culture. The leaders
could create either an individualistic or a collaborative environment. Different management styles presented by the university leaders (either the Western or Asian work culture) shaped the work practice of their subordinates.

Findings of the similarities and differences of the two universities are important for understanding collaboration patterns that exist across the social, cultural and educational contexts and how factors in particular contexts produce different forms of collaboration. The cross-country comparisons of factors that influenced collaboration enhance understanding of how and why collaboration between academics and library staff varies from one country to another.

The research findings contribute insights into the challenges of collaboration from the perspectives of library staff, academics and other involved partners, rather than solely from the library practitioners’ viewpoint. There are also national implications from this comparative study. It explicates important characteristics of the collaborative relationship in a particular country’s context including the similarities and differences in social, cultural, professional, technological structures that influence collaboration.

Theoretically, the research has examined the utility of structuration theory and duality of technology theory in studying contextual factors that influence the outcomes of the academic and librarian relationship. From a social perspective, the theoretical lens of the recurring interplay between structures and practice enabled the researcher to grasp the dynamic changes in social practices, and the complex nature of a collaborative relationship, particularly different collaboration patterns that are mediated by the interplay of social power relationships, financial resources, distinctive cultural values, and norms. From an organisational perspective, structuration theory helped to explain how organisational structure enabled and constrained practices, as well as how practices influenced and transformed the structure. From a structural perspective, Giddens’ theory underlined the importance of time and space as elements of social systems that exist in instantiations of social practices. These concepts held significant implications in the findings of the presence of time and space in collaborative practice and how time and space linked with the varying levels of collaboration. From a cultural perspective, Giddens’ conceptualisation of cultural values as shared meaning systems in relation to power, norms and knowledgeable of participants led to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics and professional culture and norms of academics and library staff.

The research contributes to the literature of organizational collaboration an emergent theoretical framework of influencing factors on the collaborative relationship between academics and library staff. From a practical perspective, it offers contextual recommendations for the Australian university and the Vietnamese university, and extrapolates key insights for interested universities and practitioners in addressing the problems of collaboration in different cultural and educational contexts.
Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Hue Thi Pham
3 May 2016
Publications during enrolment


Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and family who have spent their life supporting me in many ways.

To Mum: Your wholehearted love and pride in my pursuit of a PhD have inspired me to complete this thesis. Thank you for everything.

To Dad: You always worked very hard to ensure that I received the best education and opportunities possible. I hope that I make you feel proud.

To my husband Tuan: Your sacrifice and support in this four-year overseas study journey means so much to me. Thank you for being with me through any good and difficult times in life.

To Linh and Chau: You are my wonderful children. Thank you for being independent and for looking after each other so that I could get my work done.

To my brothers and sisters-in-law, Minh, Lan, Cuong, Hanh, Phuong and Ha: I am very fortunate to be your sister and good friends. Your loving care and support made me feel warm when we were living far apart.
Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to many people who contributed to the completion of this thesis. I express appreciation to all of them, even if not individually named below.

My greatest thanks go to my supervisors, Dr Steve Wright and Dr Kerry Tanner, whom I treat with the most respect. Without your invaluable support, wise guidance, and kindness, I would not be able to complete this research. Steve, thank you particularly for your intelligent counsel, thoughtful comments, kindest encouragement and enthusiastic interest in my topic that inspired me to go through challenging stages of the research with more confidence. Kerry, I have been very grateful for your deep wisdom, thorough feedback, generous helpfulness and caring that brought out the best in me. I am very fortunate to be supervised by both of you.

I owe gratitude to all participants of the two universities in Australia and Vietnam. This research would not be possible without their valuable contribution of ideas and experiences.

I would like to give my sincere thanks to Amanda Cossham for her assistance with copy-editing and proofreading this thesis. Amanda has copy-edited and proofread this thesis in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Monash Doctoral Degrees Handbook, section 7.1.4 Editing Assistance http://www.monash.edu.au/migr/research-degrees/handbook/chapter-seven/7-1.html and the associated IPED guidelines for Editing research theses and Levels of editing. My supervisors, Steve and Kerry, are happy with the type and level of editing that was done. Disclaimer: Amanda is a part-time PhD student in the Caulfield School of IT, Monash University, and a lecturer in Information and Library Studies at the Open Polytechnic of NZ. She teaches cataloguing and classification. Her own thesis is on Models of the bibliographic universe, and is considering conceptual and mental models related to knowledge organisation and bibliographic entities.

My special thanks go to academics and administrative staff at Caulfield School of IT, Monash University. I am grateful to Associate Professor Frada Burstein, Dr Joanne Evans, Dr Tom Denison, Dr Kirsty Williamson, Associate Professor Graeme Johanson, Dr Maria Idrawan, Dr Pari Delir Haghighi, Dr Larry Stillman, Associate Professor Judy Sheard, Dr Julie Holden and Professor Julie Fisher for their guidance, research interest and academic advice. I am thankful to Allison Michell, Christina Branton, Helen Cridland, Michelle Kitchen, Denyse Cove, Sidalavy Chaing, Cornelia Lioulis, Rafiq Tjahjadi, and Samedin Balla, for their professional and technical support.

I would like to thank all my colleagues and friends, particularly Amanda, Zahraa, Joanne, Liz, Rebecca, Misita, Danny, Peter, Mark, Yuri, Dwi, Ariesta, Abdullah, Iwan, Thoa, Hai, Thanh, Linh, My, Van, Hong, Ly, Chuyen, Lam, Thuy, Ngan for their support and friendships.

I am also grateful to my colleagues in the Monash University Caulfield library, particularly Marcus, Carlie, Jill, Lilian, and Penny for encouraging me and sharing with me their librarianship expertise and professional experiences. Their friendliness and kindest support were most appreciated. I particularly thank Andrew Dixon for his kindest support in my research process. I wish to thank Associate Professor Debra Griffith, Dr Julia Morphet and Dr Kelli Innes in Monash University for their complete trust in my capacity as a librarian.
The opportunity to work with you has given me useful experience in doing the literature review of this research.

Last but not least, I am indebted to the Australian Government Scholarships Awards for funding me to undertake this doctoral research.
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1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an introduction to the research problem concerning collaboration between academics and library staff, and an outline of the research questions. It articulates the research motivation in undertaking the study in Australia and Vietnam, and provides an overview of the higher education systems in Australian and Vietnam. The final sections of the chapter describe the research approach, proposed research contributions and structure of the thesis.

1.1 Problem statement

Developing effective forms of collaboration has become essential for organisations dealing with the challenges of complex, dynamic environments. Within the tertiary education sector, collaborative endeavours are now imperative for tackling issues associated with: the growing number and diversity of students; reduced government support of the sector and the consequent intensifying competition for limited resources; the mounting emphasis on quality assurance and measurement of outcomes in education and research; shifts in the learning paradigm; the demand for flexible modes of delivery facilitated by modern technology; and the proliferation of educational resources and resource formats.

In universities seeking to enhance academic performance and research capacity, there is increasing recognition of the need for collaboration between academics and other professional staff, including librarians. The partnership entails a range of activities including developing library resources, facilitating resource access and discovery, and embedding information literacy skills and research skills into the tertiary curriculum. Such a joint effort enhances the relevance of subject-specific resources and information and learning skills, enriching students’ learning experiences and developing lifelong learning skills (Becker, 2006; Bennett, & Gilbert 2009; Dhanavandan & Tamizhchelvan, 2014; Ivey, 2003; Smith, 2011; Wright, 2014).

Taking a university-wide focus, collaboration between academics and librarians can facilitate the transition from traditional teaching methods in universities, tackling the challenges posed by dramatic changes in the learning paradigm, modes of delivery, diversity of students, and the expansion of resources. Successful collaboration also lays the ground for university research promotion through services for academic research and scholarly communication such as bibliometric analysis, research data management and curation, open access publishing, and e-research (Adema & Schmidt, 2010; Auckland, 2012; Corrall, 2014; Corrall, Kennan, & Afzal, 2013; Kennan, Williamson, & Johanson, 2012; MacMillan, 2014).

No longer do academics have sole responsibility for the teaching, learning and research process (Doskatsch, 2003; Auckland, 2012). Collaboration enables the pooling of expertise and exploitation of available resources and technologies in ways that maximise learning.
opportunities for students. A particularly important role of collaboration is in restructuring work practices, which is crucial for innovation in educational and research environments. However, the literature has reported various challenges in the collaboration practice between academics and librarians in many universities. Academics and librarians mostly work separately due to differences in their goals, the nature of their work, their expertise and their status (Christiansen, Stomblner, & Thaxton, 2004; Shen, 2012). Academics focus on creating and transferring knowledge via teaching and research activities, while librarians concentrate more on support and providing services. Such a structural divide is closely related to the issue of self-positioning and institutional culture that involves an unequal power relationship between these communities (Given & Julien, 2005). The emerging role of librarians working collaboratively with academics in designing and teaching information and research skills to students, is not well acknowledged. Traditional perceptions, stereotypes of librarians and low respect for librarians’ knowledge by the disciplines, and in education more broadly, are still barriers to the initiation of collaborative activities.

Many of these challenges have been extensively discussed in the literature on collaboration between academics and librarians in the universities of developed countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia. Most of these are critical opinions from the library practitioner perspective, however. There has been a call for more systematic research examining the differences of organisational structures in the relationship between academics and librarians (Christiansen et al., 2004) and factors impacting their relationship-building in the academic environment (Phelps & Campbell, 2012).

1.2 Aims and research questions

This research is set in the field of library and information science. It examines collaboration between academics and librarians (and associated staff) in universities through the theoretical lenses of structuration theory and duality of technology theory.

The main objectives were:
- To identify characteristics of collaborative relationships between academics and librarians, and to differentiate between more and less effective forms of collaboration in different situations and contexts;
- To elucidate the factors that constrain and enable collaboration between academics and librarians, including the role of socio-cultural factors, professional boundary, information technology and other factors; and
- To develop a theoretical framework of collaboration between academics and librarians.

Based on these research objectives, the research questions were as follows:

Main research question:
How do academics and library staff collaborate, and how can the features, influences and outcomes of such collaborative relationships be theorised?
Research sub-questions:

1. What are the characteristics of collaborative relationships between academics and library staff?
2. How effective are different forms of collaboration in particular situations and contexts?
3. Which contextual factors influence the collaborative relationships between academics and library staff? In particular,
   a. How do socio-cultural factors and professional boundaries affect the collaboration?
   b. How can information technology facilitate or constrain collaboration?
4. How useful are structuration theory and duality of technology theory in elucidating the collaborative relationship between academics and library staff?

1.3 Definitions of terms

This research studies collaboration between academics and library staff in teaching and educational activities.

Collaboration is defined for this research as an educationally innovating process between academics, librarians and other relevant parties who give a high degree of commitment in working together for the enhancement of teaching, learning and research experiences in the university community. There is a lack of consensus about the exact definition of collaboration, however, and a detailed discussion of this is presented in Chapter 2, section 2.1.

Academics are professors, lecturers, researchers or tutors who are full-time, part-time or casual academic employees of a university.

Library staff includes qualified librarians, library officers and library assistants who work as part of the library, and also academic skills advisers, as found in the case of the Australian university, whose background was in education.

Faculty/faculties are used to denote an organisational unit or units in a university.

The scope of this research is limited to collaboration between academics and library staff in areas of teaching, learning, student academic and research skills development, and in some cases, library research projects. Although the literature review presents the overall contexts of collaboration including research, the current study did not focus directly on research data management, bibliometrics, research communication and publishing, e-research infrastructure and other research support related services.

1.4 Research motivation

This research derives from gaps in the current literature and the researcher’s experience in Vietnam as a librarian for an Australian higher educational institution and a local university.
Vietnam is the researcher’s homeland, and she lived and worked there before moving to study in Australia. In her role as a librarian working for both Australian and local organisations in Vietnam, she found that library collaboration with academics at the Australian institution was more fruitful and supported by the institution’s employees (academics, library staff and management), than such partnership in the Vietnamese university. The researcher became interested in exploring how and why library collaboration could be different in Australia and in Vietnam.

Australia is the developed country with which Vietnam has the closest educational links. Australia has exerted a strong influence on the recent development of higher education in Vietnam, as well as the improvement of its human resources. It is the largest exporter of education to Vietnam and is the most preferred destination among developed countries for the overseas education of the Vietnamese people (Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2013). For years, Australia has been the largest tertiary scholarship sponsor in Vietnam. Many alumni of Australian universities have become leaders and senior staff in government agencies, research institutions and universities in Vietnam. The bilateral relationship in the education sector has been established from the government to the community level. Australians have actively contributed to development programmes in Vietnam. Collaboration in high-quality research across disciplines has been a significant application of Australian education (Australian Trade Commission, 2013).

Such a strong educational relationship between a developed country and a developing country would make the study of collaboration between academics and library staff in Australian and Vietnamese universities beneficial for both countries.

In the light of the above, this research focuses on collaboration between academics and library staff in the educational contexts of Australia and Vietnam, comparing and contrasting the nature of collaboration in each country.

1.5 Setting the scene of the study

The following sections provide background information about the higher education systems in Australia and Vietnam. They cover the important changes in the higher education systems and their impacts on the nature of work of academics and library staff, and influences of structural changes, the development of technology, and the emergence of the teaching and research partnership between academics and library staff in the two educational systems.

1.5.1 Higher education in Australia

The Australian higher education system has experienced remarkable changes over the last 30 years from the establishment of massive institutions formed by the mergers of universities and lower level tertiary institutions (colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology), to the reduction of the Government funding allocated for the sector (Bruce, 2001; Ryan, 2009), to the development of technology in education (De Zilwa, 2010). According to the Australian Government’s higher education review panel led by Professor Bradley, these
strategic changes have provided improvements in various areas of the higher education system and produced significant outcomes such as: increasing participation in higher education; diversifying income sources for universities; a higher contribution by students to their education costs; the allocation of funding based on performance; and, increased diversity of the higher education system by providing support to the private sector (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008).

As a consequence, the Australian higher education system has moved from being an elite and almost exclusively government-funded system to a broader education and training system. There is now an enormous export industry in higher education driven by market demands, which derives its main revenue from tuition fees (Bradley et al., 2008; Ryan, 2009). Along with these macro-level achievements, the transformation has generated prominent challenges for the public universities that have directly affected the performance of academics and other university stakeholders. Universities have been restructured and have become “more highly regulated than ever before” (Davies, Gottsche, & Bansel, 2006). The shape of the universities and the academic profession has been redrawn under the contextual influences of fiscal constraints and dynamic changes of the environment, namely, globalisation and neoliberalism/economic rationalism; the emergent entrepreneurialism and managerialist model; the massification of student cohorts; the greater level of accountability; and the advanced development of technology (Davies et al., 2006; De Zilwa, 2010; Ferman, 2011; Ryan, 2009). Alongside the rapid responses of the majority of universities and the success of several universities, these factors have had considerable impact on university governance and structure, academic community, teaching and research (Ryan, 2009) and graduate quality.

The changes across the Australian higher education system have put greater burdens on the main roles of education and research that academics have performed so far. The reduction of funding and massification of students have noticeably increased the teaching loads of Australian academics. The intensification of work through greater compliance with the system of performance measurement has caused an imbalance between work and life demands, as many academics have to work late nights or on the weekends (De Zilwa, 2010). Their roles have been expanded beyond teaching and research to managing paperwork, marketing courses or designing the curriculum (Ferman, 2011) and dealing with communities, professional associations and leadership management (Kenny, Fluck, & Jetson, 2012). Furthermore, academics have to cope with the provision of different emerging modes of course delivery, e.g., evening, off-campus, overseas or multiple campuses, which require higher flexibility, technological skills and global knowledge (Ryan, 2009). Academic efficiency and promotion are now tracked by research productivity, research funding attainability, student satisfaction ratings and/or revenue generated from business activities (De Zilwa, 2010). These ever-increasing changes in system structures and the nature of employment have created pressure and job dissatisfaction among the academic community (Davies et al., 2006; Ryan, 2009).

As an indispensable component of universities, Australian academic libraries have experienced the same impulse as their parent institutions during the transformation of the higher education system. Macro-level changes in governance, structure and technology development have been undertaken as challenges and opportunities to optimize resources and services to benefit broad
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Communities of users (Becker, 2006; Jensen & Guha, 1995; Richards, 2008). Australian university libraries have developed common strategies to deal with professional and business issues and help them maintain their critical roles in the educational process (Austen, Schmidt, & Calvert, 2002).

In responding to the changes in teaching and learning methods, the major developments in academic libraries in Australia over the last twenty years have included: optimizing IT applications in the learning process (Austen et al., 2002; George & Luke, 1996); focusing on collaboration between librarians and academics in embedding information literacy into the curriculum and supporting international students (Austen et al., 2002; Smith, 2011); supporting research services (Kennan, Corrall, & Afzal, 2014); developing electronic resources, infrastructure, facilities, and designing information or learning commons (Bailin, 2011; Bundy, 2012); and benchmarking and measuring library performance (Austen et al., 2002; Smith, 2011). It is clear that academic libraries and librarians have confronted a number of global trends which have substantially influenced and changed their roles and the nature of the library profession.

Not surprisingly, major challenges posed by the impact on universities of macro-level changes in the higher education system, contextual influences of financial tensions, governance structure and dynamic changes of the environment (including the development of technology in education) have had important consequences on for library–faculty collaboration.

1.5.2 Higher education in Vietnam

Higher education in Vietnam has made significant advances over the past 20 years since the implementation of its innovation program. The movement from the traditional Soviet model of higher education began when the government officially issued Decree No. 90/CP to reunify and restructure the system in 1993. The outcome was impressive, with exceptional progress in the number of enrolments, from 162,000 enrolled students in 1993 to 1.54 million in 2006 (Harman, Hayden, & T. Pham, 2010). Many universities have expanded the number of disciplines they teach and placed a stronger emphasis on improvements in curricula, teaching methods and supporting resources. Research activities have been reorganised to become a part of university responsibilities (World Bank, 2008). These on-going developments have been projected to achieve higher quality and international standards for higher education in the most recent Higher Education Reform Agenda of the Government for its vision of 2006-2020. A fully integrated higher education curriculum that supports research and careers for graduates and adheres to international quality standards is one of the main Higher Education Reform Agenda objectives (World Bank, 2008). Despite the above, however, many challenges remain on the strategic front.

Along with the other authors, Harman and Nguyen (2010) have discussed a series of hurdles which challenge teaching quality in higher education. The lack of qualified academic staff, passive teaching methods, absence of teaching motivation, inflexibility of curricula, poor sources of learning materials and low income of most teachers are commonly mentioned. Rigid curriculum frameworks have also been blamed for the heavy teaching workload of academics (Hayden & Lam, 2010). The teaching framework often comprises two main components, in which the foundation part requires students to study general subject units
during the first two years, while the ensuing professional part covers specific subject units taken for the final two years. Each unit normally involves 45-90 hours of face-to-face tuition. In classes, the traditional teaching mode is one in which teachers typically lecture while students passively listen and memorise in order to pass the examination. Graduates are, as a consequence, lacking the generic and practical skills needed to perform satisfactorily in the workplace (World Bank, 2008).

Academic research activities undertaken by faculties in Vietnam’s higher education institutions are limited. Hayden and Lam (2010) and Harman and Nguyen (2010) see the cause of this as lying in the lasting effects of the Soviet education system, in which teaching was seen as the main role of an academic while research was undertaken by the research institutions. The low rate of involvement in research was further reported as being due to: limited investment in science and technology, and inadequate resources and facilities (Hayden & Lam, 2010); shortage of professional researchers (Hien, 2010); the high teaching volume, inadequate financial support and lack of research skills training in the majority of faculty (World Bank, 2008); and the low level of English competency for publishing in international journals.

Radical changes are required to improve teaching, learning and research quality. Higher education institutions need to move from didactic to interactive teaching and problem-based learning modes to enhance students’ participation and creativeness (Harman & Nguyen, 2010). Problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, communication and teamwork skills, information literacy and lifelong learning skills need to be integrated into the curriculum (Harman & Nguyen, 2010; Hayden & Lam, 2010; World Bank, 2008). The World Bank further highlighted the significance of providing research skills training and support among faculty and research students to achieve higher quality research. At the same time, the essential roles of academic libraries and librarians in supporting these missions have rarely been recognised by scholars of education.

The influence of the traditional teaching and learning approach in which the lecturer/teacher is the single source of knowledge has undervalued the role of the library. Librarians are mainly contacted by academics for lending materials and basic information queries. While Vietnamese university libraries have recently made an increasing effort to engage with academics in teaching information literacy, the lack of on-going collaboration between academics and librarians has been reported as one of the main obstacles limiting the success of these ventures (Diep, 2011; X. H. Pham, 2008). However, empirical studies that specifically examine the relationship between the two professions in Vietnam have not been undertaken.

1.6 Research approach

This research is philosophically interpretive, and conducted as a qualitative study at one Australian university and one Vietnamese university. It aimed to explore the meaning and the process of how collaboration between academics and librarians is socially constituted by human interactions in a given socio-economic, cultural and political context. The research used an embedded multiple case study design, gathering evidence broadly across each university as well as from specific library collaboration cases in different faculties. This design
facilitates the collection of in-depth insights and enables the comparing and contrasting of experiences within each university and across both universities.

At the Australian university, data collection involved 29 in-depth individual interviews with 14 academics, 12 library staff and one administrative staff member, a focus group of four library staff, observation sessions, and the examination of websites and a variety of organisational documents.

At the Vietnamese university, data collection included nine detailed written responses to a list of questions, 12 semi-structured interviews, numerous informal conversations, a workshop with 15 academics and library staff, and various organisational documents.

Questions and topics discussed at both universities concerned collaboration activities and the influence of structure, socio-cultural contexts, professional boundaries, and how technology either enabled or constrained collaboration practices. Participants contributed important insights, experiences, new ideas and opinions about various critical issues related to their collaboration practices. Data collected at both universities was very rich in nature, which has been useful for exploring meanings and the process of collaboration between academics and library staff, and how their collaborative relationships are socially constituted by human interactions in different socio-cultural and educational contexts.

1.7 Research contributions

This research contributes to theory and to practice. Its contributions to theory include:

- Enhanced understanding of the nature of the collaborative relationships between academics and library staff, as well as factors that influence the practice and outcomes of collaboration;
- Generalisations of theoretical insights for future research into organisational collaboration in different countries;
- A theoretical framework of collaboration that incorporates key factors which enable and constrain collaboration;
- New insights into the usefulness and limitations of structuration theory and the duality of technology theory in studying collaboration, and into how personal dimensions influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of organisational members engaged in collaboration; and
- A model of case study research design for studies of organisational collaboration.

The contributions to practice include:

- A richer understanding of the collaboration practice, and challenges in initiating and building relationships in organisations;
- Recommendations for the Australian and Vietnamese universities regarding particular elements of collaboration in specific organisational, cultural and educational contexts; and
- Implications for the wider university tertiary education sector in addressing issues of collaboration in various academic contexts.
1.8 Research phases

This research comprised four phases (Figure 1-1).

Research Phase 1—Review of relevant literature and theory: This phase involved reviewing key collaboration concepts and major factors influencing collaboration between academics and library staff in universities, particularly in Australia and Vietnam. It was followed by an investigation of the potential application of the theoretical lenses of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and the duality of technology theory (Orlikowski, 1992a) in this research.

Research Phase 2 – Research design: This phrase involved designing a case study including selecting cases and participants, designing research instruments, and developing techniques for the data collection phase.

Research Phase 3 – Data collection: This phase involved collecting data at one Australian university and one Vietnamese university, transcribing data, and selecting techniques for data analysis.

Research Phase 4 – Data analysis: This phase began with coding and analysing data, developing themes, and reporting findings. Based on the analysed data, comparison, discussions, theorisation and implications for the research were developed.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

**Figure 1-1: Research phases**

- **Phase 1**
  - Review of relevant literature and theory
    - Broad review of collaboration and relevant concepts
    - Collaboration in Australia & in Vietnam
    - Structuration theory
    - The duality of technology
    - Research questions
    - Theoretical perspectives

- **Phase 2**
  - Research design
    - Case study
    - Selection of cases
    - Selection of participants
    - Research instruments
    - Data collection techniques

- **Phase 3**
  - Data Collection
    - Transcribing and coding
    - Middle-level analysis technique
    - Grounded theory techniques
    - Cross-case comparison
    - Theoretical perspectives

- **Phase 4**
  - Data Analysis
    - Findings and Discussion
    - Report of findings
    - Corroboration of evidence
    - Discussion and theorisations
    - Implications of the research


1.9 Chapter structure

There are eight chapters in this thesis. A summary of each chapter is given in the Table 1-1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research phases</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Chapter summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1</strong> – Review of relevant literature and theory</td>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>Introduces research problems, research questions, and setting the scope of the research by giving an overview of higher education systems in Australian and Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature review</td>
<td>Reviews of collaboration concepts in the disciplines of education, library and information science, knowledge management, and organisational behaviour and management; and stages and challenges in collaboration between academics and library staff in universities, particularly in Australia and Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 3: Theoretical framework</td>
<td>Investigates main elements of structuration theory and the duality of technology theory, and their potential contribution in analysing factors that influence the nature of the relationship between library staff and academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2</strong> – Research design</td>
<td>Chapter 4: Research design</td>
<td>Outlines the philosophical perspective, case study research methods, fieldwork design, data collection at the Australian and Vietnamese universities, and selections of data analysis techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 3</strong> – Data collection</td>
<td>Chapter 5: The Australian case findings</td>
<td>Presents findings of the main factors that influenced collaboration between academics and library staff at the Australian university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 6: The Vietnamese case findings</td>
<td>Presents findings of the main factors that influenced collaboration between academics and library staff at the Vietnamese university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 7: Discussion</td>
<td>Compares and discusses findings of the Australian and Vietnamese case studies in the broader context of the literature and across different social and cultural systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 8: Implications and Conclusions</td>
<td>Draws together research findings to address the research questions and develops implications for theory and practice.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1-1: Chapter summary
2 Literature review

This chapter first examines literature concerning key collaboration concepts in the related disciplines of education, library and information science, knowledge management and organisational management, and the differences between ambiguous terms used in the literature: coordination, cooperation and collaboration. The second section provides a picture of the current state of collaboration between academics and library staff in universities, and major factors influencing their collaboration. Then a more detailed investigation of the current practice of collaboration between academics and librarians in the universities of Australia and Vietnam is given.

2.1 Collaboration concepts

2.1.1 Definitions of collaboration across some related disciplines

Collaboration has emerged as a long-term solution for sustaining the development of individuals and organizations. This mode of human relationship has been constructed to aggregate knowledge, power and resources from people across organizational boundaries to solve issues that cannot be accommodated individually. It constitutes “a value system upon which new solutions can be framed” (Appley & Winder, 1977, p.280) to address critical research problems, constant changes of technology and the vibrant development of knowledge and expertise (Hara, Solomon, Seung-Lye, & Sonnenwald, 2003). In tertiary education, collaboration undoubtedly produces multilevel benefits to teaching and learning communities in “breaking down the silos of traditional education” (Gilbert, 2009, p.141) more effectively under time and resource constraints.

In spite of the significant role of collaboration, there has been, however, a lack of consensus and coherence in defining its meaning across the disciplines (Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2009). The concept is very complex and multidimensional, and may involve processes, structures, power, authority, rules, resources, expertise, awareness, behaviours, norms, commitment, expectations and more (D’Amour, Ferrada-Videla, San Martin, & Beaulie, 2005; Kraus, 1980). Ambiguities also occur in the delineation of collaboration and related aspects: networking, coordination, and cooperation (Camarinha-Matos & Afsarmanesh, 2006). It is therefore important to understand the key themes of collaboration in order to develop insights in relation to the specific contexts in which collaboration between academics and library staff takes place.

For this reason, the literature review has identified four broad disciplines that yield insights into collaboration in universities: management and organisational behaviour, knowledge management, education and research, and library and information science (Table 2.1). Management and organisational behaviour literature emphasises particular domains of
collaboration and issues or problems, and explores the process of collaborative problem-solving as well as creating rules and structures for collaboration practices. Knowledge management is important given that collaboration combines mental effort for the creation and transfer of knowledge based on trust and committed relationships. Education and research, and library and information science, are relevant in exploring collaboration between academics and librarians, because it is important to understand the concept of collaboration from the perspective of these key participant groups of the research.

Table 2.1 presents key definitions of collaboration in four related disciplines: management and organisational behaviour, knowledge management, education and research, and library and information science. These definitions are categorised into nine main concepts of collaboration:

i. Collaboration as joint working, learning and sharing process.

ii. Collaboration as form of communication.

iii. Collaboration as involvement of governance and administration.

iv. Collaboration as contribution of knowledgeable actors.

v. Collaboration as mutuality and norms.

vi. Collaboration as utilization of resources.

vii. Collaboration as facilitation of knowledge sharing and creation.

viii. Collaboration as enhancement of teaching, learning and research quality.

ix. Collaboration as integration of instruction with the curriculum.
### Table 2-1: Definitions of collaboration in management and organisational behaviours, knowledge management, education and research, and library and information science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
<th>MAIN CONCEPTS OF GIVEN DEFINITIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In management and organisational behaviour literature collaboration:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>is “a relational system in which:</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) individuals in a group share mutual aspirations and a common conceptual framework;</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) the interactions among individuals are characterized by ‘justice as fairness’; and</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) these aspirations and conceptualizations are characterized by each individual’s <em>consciousness</em> of his/her motives toward the other; by <em>caring</em> or concern for the other; and by <em>commitment</em> to work with the other over time provided that this commitment is a matter of <em>choice.</em>” (Appley &amp; Winder, 1977, p.281)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>“…involves a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain. Five features are critical to the process:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) the stakeholders are interdependent;</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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<td>(2) solutions emerge by dealing constructively with differences;</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) joint ownership of decisions is involved;</td>
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<td>(4) the stakeholders assume collective responsibility for the future direction of the domain; and</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) collaboration is an emergent process.” (Gray, 1989, p.11)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… refers to organizing for joint action among individuals, organizations and processes” (Shannon, 2001, abstract).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...[is] generating new forms of emergent governance institutions” (abstract).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… refers to certain kinds of cooperative behaviour, certain forms of institutions, and certain kinds of communicative action” (p. 11).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain.” (Wood &amp; Gray, 1991, p.146)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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</table>

1 The table was designed based on model table developed by Tanner (2006, Table 5-1)
In management and organisational behaviour literature collaboration:

“…represent[s] complementary domains of expertise. As collaborators they not only plan, decide and act jointly, they also think together, combining independent conceptual schemes to create an original framework, there is a commitment to shared resources, power and talent: no individual's point of view dominates, authority for decisions and actions resides in the group and work products reflect a blending of all participants’ contributions.” (Minnis, John-Steiner, & Weber 1994, p. C-2 as cited in John-Steiner, Weber, and Minnis (1998))

“In management and organisational behaviour literature collaboration:

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<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In management and organisational behaviour literature collaboration:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“…represent[s] complementary domains of expertise. As collaborators they not only plan, decide and act jointly, they also think together, combining independent conceptual schemes to create an original framework, there is a commitment to shared resources, power and talent: no individual’s point of view dominates, authority for decisions and actions resides in the group and work products reflect a blending of all participants’ contributions.” (Minnis, John-Steiner, &amp; Weber 1994, p. C-2 as cited in John-Steiner, Weber, and Minnis (1998))</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>“… is a process in which autonomous or semi-autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions.” (Thomson et al., 2009, p. 25)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>“… is a multidimensional, variable construct composed of five key dimensions, two of which are structural in nature (governance and administration), two of which are social capital dimensions (mutuality and norms), and one of which involves agency (organizational autonomy).” (p. 25)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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In knowledge management, collaboration:

“In knowledge management, collaboration:

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<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
<th>MAIN CONCEPTS OF GIVEN DEFINITIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>“… is the meta-capability by which knowledge will be exploited to drive innovation and reap its economic benefits.” (R. E. Miles, Snow, &amp; G. Miles, 2000, p. 300)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… helps a company to create and transfer knowledge. Knowledge creation and utilisation, in turn, lead to innovation.” (p. 300)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… is defined as the actor’s capability to build and manage network relationships based on mutual trust, communication and commitment.” (Blomqvist &amp; Levy, 2006, p. 40)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… is a necessary antecedent of knowledge creation and transfer. The former is always social action, and innovations emerge as a synthesis of complementary knowledge among asymmetric actors.” (p. 41)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… not only transfers existing knowledge among organizations, but also facilitates the creation of new knowledge and produce[s] synergistic solutions.” (Hardy, Phillips, &amp; Lawrence, 2003, abstract)</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… among experts enables knowledge to be activated.” (Qureshi, Briggs, &amp; Hlupic, 2006, p.198)</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… [aims] to achieve a goal through joint effort, thus, creating value” (p. 213).</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
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**DEFINITIONS**

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<th>MAIN CONCEPTS OF GIVEN DEFINITIONS</th>
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**In knowledge management, collaboration:**

“… seems to capture the spirit and represent one of the underpinning tenets of knowledge management, that of working together to achieve common goals and objectives. In knowledge focused organizations, knowledge sharing is highly dependent on effective on-going collaboration. Across organizations […] collaboration is recognized as a positive, something that not only helps add value, but can also create new value.” (Laycock, 2005, p. 527)

**In education and research, collaboration:**

“… is a pedagogical style that emphasizes cooperative efforts among students, faculty and administrators (Whipple, 1987, abstract). [It has] the following six characteristics:

1. both teachers and learners are active participants in the educational process;
2. bridges the gulf between teachers and students;
3. creates a sense of community;
4. means that knowledge is created not transferred;
5. makes the boundaries between teaching and research less distinct; and
6. locates knowledge in the community rather than in the individuals.” (abstract)

“… [is] a means to counter isolation, improve teacher practice and student learning, build a common vision for schooling, and foster collective action around school reform.” (Achinstein, 2002, abstract)

“… is defined as a dynamic framework for efforts that endorses interdependence and parity during interactive exchange of resources between at least two partners who work together in a decision-making process that is influenced by cultural and systemic factors to achieve common goals.” (M. Welch & Sheridan, 1995, p. 11)

“… [that involves] the teachers and other partners has the potential to bring together the reflective and dialogic processes of professional development.” (Adamson & Walker, 2011, p. 29)

“… is teachers’ collaborative problem-solving [process] in pursuit of common goals. Groups of teachers and/or researchers work together locally, within schools, or peripherally, for example, in meetings separate from immediate practice, to develop new way of teaching (Butler, Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, & Beckham, 2004, p. 437)

“… [is] a means of “reconstructing authentic activity within an existing professional community” and linking with “… teachers’ self-regulated learning and reflection-on-action …” (p. 453)
### Definitions

**In education and research, collaboration:**

“… is a cooperative endeavour that involves common goals, coordinated effort, and outcomes or products for which the collaborators share responsibility and credit.” (Austin & Baldwin, 1992, [p.1])

“… increases productivity, maintains motivation, and stimulates creativity and risk taking. It can maximize the use of limited resources and could enhance the quality of teaching and research. Sometimes complex problems accompany faculty collaboration, however, such as difficulty concerning evaluation and assigning credit for work produced in collaboration.” (p. [1]).

“… is a style for interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal” (Friend & Cook, 1990, p. 72).

“… emphasises the following conditions: (a) a mutual goal, (b) parity among participants, (c) shared participation, (d) shared accountability, (e) shared resources, and (f) voluntariness. In addition, a set of emergent characteristics seem to enable collaboration at the outset of an activity, and these same characteristics grow in importance throughout successful collaboration.” (p. 72).

**In library and information science, collaboration:**

“… is a symbiotic process that requires active, genuine effort and commitment by all members of the instructional team.” (American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communication and Technology, 1998, pp. 50-51)

“… through shared planning, teaching, collection development and management strategies provides the model for all programmes’ connections to the larger learning community.” (p. 123)

“… is a process that SLMSs [school library media specialists] and teachers work as a team to design learning experiences that are meaningful and developmentally appropriate…. When SLMSs are knowledgeable of content area standards, they are able to integrate information literacy standards in collaboration with teachers.” (Corey, 2002, p. 21)

“… recognises four behaviours … essential for successful collaborative teaching partnerships: a shared understood goal; mutual respect, tolerance, and trust; competence for the task at hand by each of the partners; and ongoing communication.” (Ivey, 2003, p. 102)

“… is multidisciplinary when team members from different disciplines coordinate their efforts to achieve a common goal but contributions from each discipline are complementary rather than integrative, typified by independent work that is then shared with the group.” (García-Milian et al., 2013, p. 162)

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<tr>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Main Concepts of Given Definitions</th>
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<tr>
<td>In education and research, collaboration:</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>In library and information science, collaboration:</td>
<td>✓</td>
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## Definitions

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<th>In library and information science, collaboration:</th>
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<tr>
<td>“…is a trusting, working relationship between two or more equal participants involved in shared thinking, shared planning and shared creation of integrated instruction. Through a shared vision and shared objectives, student learning opportunities are created that integrate subject content and information literacy by co-planning, co-implementing, and co-evaluating students’ progress throughout the instructional process in order to improve student learning in all areas of the curriculum.” (Montiel-Overall, 2005b, p. [3])</td>
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- Shared understanding – Partners need to have a shared understanding of the purpose and importance of curricular integration of information literacy and the outcomes of information literacy integration.
- Shared knowledge – Partners share specialised knowledge and provide support from different areas of expertise, such as subject knowledge, information resources, writing, referencing, learning design, and IT.
- Joint dialogue with respect and tolerance – Partners need to interact, negotiate and communicate to achieve the same goals with mutual respect and tolerance.
- Joint efforts with trust and support – Partners need to work together to complete the agreed tasks with a high level of trust and support.” (Wang, 2011, p. 706)
Given the complex and highly variable nature of the definitions of collaboration shown in Table 2-1, the concepts have been reviewed in the areas of management and organisational behaviour, knowledge management, education, and library and information science, and grouped into nine themes that are discussed next. Some of the relevant collaboration concepts from primary and secondary school levels were included due to the richness of their insights into the collaborative relationship between the library staff and educators in these educational contexts.

i. **Collaboration as joint working, learning and sharing process:** A majority of authors define collaboration as a process or processes in which people are interdependently working together toward a common goal. For Gray (1989), collaboration is an “emergent process” which reflects the change of the organization over time where participants are working constructively and jointly in the decision-making process. In education, this interpretation focuses specifically on the activities of teaching, learning and researching among educational participants, in which knowledge can be activated and transferred. To Whipple (1987), it is “the educational process” that narrows the distance between educators and learners, teaching and research to create a knowledgeable community. In the library and information science, the emphasis of collaboration on teamwork is to “design learning experiences” (Corey, 2002), “co-planning, co-implementing, co-evaluating students’ progress throughout the instructional process” (Montiel-Overall, 2005b), or joint educational activities in the integration of information literacy into the curriculum such as designing and marking assessment tasks, organising class activities and learning resources (Wang, 2011). Solomon’s (1997) study of the influence of information behaviour on sense making found challenges “to build common ground and develop meaning from uncertain and ambiguous evidence” unless issues of collaboration process and types of needed information are clear to involved party (p.1107). Collaboration achieved better outcome if academics and librarians shared underlying knowledge and language of teaching in information literacy education is positive element (Brasley 2008; Ivey, 2003; Solomon, 1997).

ii. **Collaboration as form of communication:** The role of communication in building and sustaining the outcome of collaboration is recognized by authors in all the areas of education (Adamson & Walker, 2011), knowledge management (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006), and library science (Ivey, 2003). Adamson and Walker found that collaboration “has the potential to bring together the reflective and dialogic process of professional development” (p. 29). Blomqvist and Levy, and Ivey, share a concern about the importance of communication in managing the on-going relationship. Two of the definitions explicitly claimed collaboration as “certain kinds of communicative actions” that actors engage in, gaining shared vision and building capacity to achieve a common goal (Shannon, 2002), and as a process in which “actors interact through formal and informal negotiation” to act jointly (Thomson et al., 2009). For other authors, the concept of communication seems to be implicitly embedded through the notions of “interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making” (Friend & Cook, 1990) or “a blending of all participants’ contributions” (John-
iii.  **Collaboration as an involvement of governance and administration:** The notion of “sharing rules and structure” or “emergent governance” and “administrative rules” that governs the actions of collaborators was articulated by many authors. Wood and Gray (1991) claimed that “the participating stakeholders must explicitly agree on the rules and norms that will govern their interactive process” (p. 148). Both Wood and Gray (1991) and Shannon (2002) emphasized that structure is “evolving” and continuously created by the agency of actors. Thomson et al. (2009) expanded Wood and Gray’s theoretical perspectives by incorporating three critical groups of dimensions, i.e., structural dimensions (governance, administration), social capital dimensions (mutuality and norms) and agency dimension (organizational autonomy) into their definition. They found that there must be some form of administrative structures existing to turn governance to action. Welch and Sheridan (1995) were concerned that the dominant effects of policies and procedures may either facilitate or impede the partnership as they govern the way educators work together. Besides the formal system such as budget, rules, organizational regulations, staffing policies and structures, external forces outside of educational institutions such as state law and conventions as well as other governing bodies’ orders have critically influenced the relationship of educational participants.

iv.  **Collaboration as contribution of knowledgeable actors:** The contribution of expertise and capability in collaboration is considerable in the educational environment where knowledgeable actors are academics, students, librarians and administrators. This critical attribute of the educators appears in the majority of definitions. In knowledge management, it refers to the capability of actors to collaborate with their partners to produce the complementary knowledge that drives innovation (Miles et al., 2000; Blomqvist & Levy, 2006). In education, the knowledge power of actors allows them to be effectively involved in the educational process to advance the quality of their teaching, learning and research (Adamson & Walker, 2011; Whipple, 1987). John-Steiner et al. (1998) strongly advocated that “the principals in a true collaboration represent complementary domains of expertise”. In library and information science, expertise and professional competency of library specialists and teachers produces accumulative knowledge that is “essential for successful teaching partnership” (Ivey, 2003); for designing more sophisticated learning experiences (Corey, 2002); and to “support authentic, information based learning” (American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communication and Technology, 1998).

v.  **Collaboration as mutuality and norms:** The most popular characteristics of collaboration accommodated in the majority of definitions are the value of joint effort, commitment, positive attitudes and behaviours of collaborators throughout the collaboration journey. However, given the ideal outcomes of collaboration overwhelmingly mentioned in the literature, Austin and Baldwin (1992) were concerned that “power, influence, professional identity, and integrity” are commonly
the issues of academic collaboration. They gave an example of the possibilities of a lower-status party being over-exploited when their partners are pursuing professional credit. Welch (2000) believed that educational partnership could be a disaster for a collaborator due to the impact of the educational institution’s culture and systemic factors such as conceptual, practical, attitudinal and professional barriers. The success of collaboration was found to significantly depend on “his/her motives towards the other; … caring or concern for the other and … commitment to work with the other over time” (Appley & Winder, 1977). Importantly, authors across the disciplines such as Blomqvist and Levy (2006), the American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communication and Technology (1998), Lippincott (2000), Montiel-Overall (2005a, 2005b) and Wang (2011) have all agreed on the significance of mutual trust and respect and commitment of collaborators towards working responsibly and sharing resources with their partners over the long term. In the area of library and information science, Lippincott (2000) particularly emphasized that the attitude to learn from and respect one another’s profession is an important personal characteristic in a successful partnership between librarians and teachers.

vi. **Collaboration as utilization of resources**: Collaboration is reported as an effective solution for an organization’s resourcing, either by taking advantage of a partner’s resources or by overcoming the difficulties with the scarcity of resources. In educational settings, Welch and Sheridan (1995) found that when knowledge, skills and resources are utilized among a community of scholars, their diversity of expertise helps the issues and goal to be conceptualized and answered by various possible solutions. Friend and Cook (1990) gave an example of collaboration in schools where principals, teachers and counsellors develop self-concept sessions for students, each contributing his or her own differing resources such as knowledge about students’ expectations, programs, time, funds and materials, which are all necessary conditions for the constitution process.

vii. **Collaboration as facilitation of knowledge creation and sharing**: Miles et al. (2000) demonstrated knowledge creation and transfer as a key result generated from collaboration, in their model of the innovation process. Their views are supported by Hardy et al. (2003), Blomqvist and Levy (2006) and Wang (2011) who advocate knowledge sharing as a noteworthy outcome of effective collaboration. Blomqvist and Levy (2006) asserted that “collaboration is a necessary antecedent of knowledge creation and transfer” (p. 36).

viii. **Collaboration as an enhancement of teaching, learning and research quality**: Benefits of collaboration in the innovation of education and research are explicitly shown by authors in the education and library professions. Outcomes of collaboration help bridge the distinction between teaching and researching (Whipple, 1987); enhance the quality of teaching and learning activities (Austin & Baldwin, 1992; Achinstein, 2002, Butler et al., 2004; American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communication and Technology, 1998; Corey, 2002; Montiel-Overall, 2005a, 2005b); counter isolation and promote collective actions
(Achinstein, 2002); and promote curriculum innovation and school reform (Montiel-Overall, 2005a, 2005b). Authors in the knowledge management field mentioned the association of collaboration with organizational learning. Hardy et al. (2003) showed that “learning in collaboration is about learning from a partner and the collaboration has served its purpose once the necessary organizational knowledge has been successfully transferred” (p. 325).

ix. **Collaboration as an integration of instruction with the curriculum.** This aspect of collaboration was defined by the majority of library authors in particular to reflect the major aims of librarians in the course of developing and fully incorporating information literacy programs to enhance student learning. It has been recognized as the highest level of collaboration in which academics and librarians are working together to integrate the curricula of subject content and library instruction, to offer students “coherent instruction” throughout the whole curriculum (Montiel-Overall, 2005b; Wang, 2011). The outcome of the embedded instructional curriculum is critical to students as it not only supports them to comprehend knowledge of the subject, but also enables them to acquire the associated information and learning skills (American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communication and Technology, 1998).

Overall, the similarities and differences of the defining features demonstrated by various authors were discovered. The most common themes appearing across the disciplines are: collaboration as joint working and sharing process or processes; collaboration as form of communication; collaboration as an element of governance and administration; collaboration as an involvement of knowledgeable actors; collaboration as mutuality and norms; and collaboration as utilization of resources. Further to those commonly found facets, continuous investigation of collaboration concepts in the contexts of management and organisational behaviour, knowledge management, education, and library and information science showed three main interrelated themes, driven by the specific work-related goals: collaboration as enhancement of teaching, learning and research quality; collaboration as facilitation of knowledge sharing and creation; and collaboration as an integration of library instruction with curriculum. Discussion of these key themes of collaboration in related disciplines provided valuable background knowledge for this research from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

### 2.1.2 Differentiating levels of collaboration

There is a common recognition of three different levels of collaboration ascertaining the “degree of the relationship”, from the modest level to the highest level of commitment among collaborators, i.e., coordination or cooperation and collaboration. The distinctions between these terms have been contested by various authors since they have often been used interchangeably to denote different layers of meaning and purpose.

**Coordination:** A short-term relationship in which the parties involved coordinate their efforts to work in a more scheduled way and with more specified roles and goals. Participants may need
to adjust their activities and time to contribute to their complementary goals (Camarinha-Matos & Afsarmanesh, 2006). Montiel-Overall (2005) gave an example of coordination between librarians and teachers who organized a book fair to support readers at different levels. She found that although commitment, time and effort are minimally required, this process can grow to a more intense relationship if trust is developed among participants.

Cooperation: Usually requires a higher level of commitment than coordination, involving resource-sharing and more clearly defined responsibilities. The interaction occurs among independent parties who work together to achieve mutual agreement “but their work together does not progress beyond this level” (New England Program in Teacher Education, 1973 as cited in Hord, 1986). Although following a common plan, participants often fulfil their tasks independently with some coordination, then hand over to other parties to complete the end product (Camarinha-Matos & Afsarmanesh, 2006; Montiel-Overall, 2005a). It often results in a low-level of co-working even where their goals are compatible as a match of individual contributions.

Collaboration: Can be clearly distinguished from cooperation and coordination as this process obtains a higher degree of commitment in sharing roles, resources and knowledge from the entities involved who work together to achieve a common goal. The relationship structures are formal with a clear vision of leadership and long-term outcomes (Gajda, 2004). At this level, the parties involved are jointly planning, co-thinking, creating together and participating in the decision-making process (Montiel-Overall, 2005b). Sharing risks, responsibilities and rewards as a group builds a sense of joint identity (Camarinha-Matos & Afsarmanesh, 2006).

Collaboration reaches the seamless level as “members belong to one system” and mutual trust is highly developed from frequent communication (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, & Tollefson, 2006). The notion of collaboration is commonly perceived as the highest level of the relationship on a continuum in which cooperation, coordination and collaboration represent increasing levels of intensity and interaction. Yue and Beyerlein (2006) analysed the specific differences between coordination, cooperation and collaboration in five main dimensions of the relationship, i.e., social interaction, scope, autonomy, dynamic and temporality. From coordination to collaboration, the extent of social interaction differs from few to rich; the scope of the field of interest varies from narrow to broad; the degree of autonomy and dynamism develops from low to high; and the temporality changed from discrete to on-going (Yue & Beyerlein, 2006, p.65).

This research is focusing on the highest order of the integration continuum, collaboration, thus the differentiation of coordination, cooperation and collaboration is helpful in understanding the philosophy and practices embedded in these interconnected concepts and how they, as processes, evolve as integral parts of collaboration.

Since the term collaboration and partnership were commonly used interchangeably in various contexts although they somehow carried different meanings, it is useful to understand their difference. Collaboration is commonly defined as a process in which people work together to achieve a common goal. Partnership, on the other hand, partnership refers to the “relationship
between two or more persons who agree to pool talent and money and share goal and process to achieve agreed outcome” (Kariwo & Zindi, 2014). A partnership might involve legal agreements specifying the responsibilities of each party (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). Carnwell described collaboration “is a means of making ‘partnership’ work or “what we do when we engage successfully in a ‘partnership’” (p.16). In this current research, the term partnership referred to a more established form of collaboration i.e. teaching partnership, research partnership (see details in section 2.2)

2.1.3 A preliminary definition of collaboration to guide this research

With the aim of better understanding the multifaceted meanings of collaboration to accommodate the most significant concepts that should be investigated in this research, a broad definition of collaboration is given below:

*Collaboration is an interactive process among internal and external stakeholders who work together to communicate their knowledge, skills, resources and authority in planning, designing, decision making and problem solving process for the achievement of a mutual goal.*

In the context of collaboration between academics and library staff in the university environment:

*Collaboration is an educationally innovating process among academics, librarians and other relevant parties who give a high degree of commitment in working together for the enhancement of teaching, learning and research experiences in the university community.*

**Main insights 2.1:**

Collaboration is a multidimensional concept, which commonly involves processes, structures, power and autonomy, rules, resources, expertise, behaviours, awareness, norms, commitment, and expectations. Collaboration represents the highest level of the relationship.

Key aspects of collaboration include: joint working; learning and sharing process; importance of communication; involvement of governance and administration; contribution of knowledgeable actors; mutual understandings and shared norms. Collaboration helps educational institutions in terms of utilising resources, enhancing teaching, learning and research quality, and facilitating knowledge sharing and creation. In library and information science, this partnership particularly emphasises the integration process of library instruction and learning skills into the curriculum.

2.2 Collaboration between academics and library staff in universities

Current literature is enriched with reports of various collaborative initiatives between librarians and faculty members in universities around the world. There is a significant development in the areas of collaboration activities between academics and library staff. Traditionally, library
staff mainly worked with faculty staff in library bibliographic instruction and collection development related activities. However, since the developments in information technology and the proliferation of electronic resources, the focus of collaboration has shifted to more sophisticated information and research skills training, research projects and the applications of educational technology. The most widely reported partnerships are found in four main areas: teaching partnership, research partnership, collection development, and implementation of technology.

Teaching partnership between library staff and academics in designing, teaching, and integrating information literacy skills into the subject curriculum is the foremost area of collaboration. There are numerous examples in different disciplines. Ellis and Beck (2003) described a collaborative teaching project between subject librarians and business faculty in utilising subject resources, courseware management systems and search engines to develop student information literacy and research skills at Villa Julie College, Maryland. Donner, Taylor, and Hodson Carlton (2001) reported a systematic design and integration of information literacy and research skills in a year-by-year approach for nursing students at Ball State University, Indiana. Similarly, librarians and academics at the University of Toronto developed three different collaboration models in which tailored information skills were embedded into the curricula of health science. Øvern (2014) shared her experiences of embedded librarianship in different programs of two faculties at Gjøvik University College, Norway (radiography and interaction design), in which she worked with academics to teach and assess information skills in doing literature review assignments. Gunnarsson, Kulesza, and Pettersson (2014) presented a collaboration case in which academics and librarians were team-teaching international students how to avoid plagiarism in a research methodology course at Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden.

Research partnership: This collaboration model, where library members and academics worked jointly on disciplinary research projects, scholarship grants, system innovation programs, institutional repositories and data management, was reported in fewer cases than other types of collaboration (Bruce, 2001; Creaser & Spezi, 2014). Vautier (2001) described a collaboration model of senior librarians at Curtin University, Australia, supporting academic staff and research students of different disciplines with library resources and appropriate level of information literacy skills. Parton and Fleming (2007) presented a collaborative project with library staff of the Bournemouth University in a Peer Assisted Learning Scheme to develop materials that supported new students with both social and academic skills. Another interesting project reported by García-Milian et al. (2013) was an implementation of VIVO, a resource discovery and collaboration system in which librarians worked with technology experts and academic members in supporting, developing, adopting, training and management of the network. However, the research partnership collaboration was found to be much less “developed and structured” than the teaching partnership due to the librarians’ lack of confidence in research collaboration with academics or librarians’ need to balance their time to work in research partnership with supporting student learning (Creaser & Spezi, 2014, p. 194).
Provision of research support services: This trending area of collaboration showed significant efforts of libraries in providing support services for academic research and digital scholarship such as bibliometric analysis, research data management and curation, research communication and open access publishing, and e-research services (Adema & Schmidt, 2010; Auckland, 2012; Corrall, 2014; Corrall, Kennan, & Afzal, 2013; Kennan, Williamson, & Johanson, 2012; MacMillan, 2014). In bibliometric services, libraries are actively involved in supporting citation analysis and impact calculations for researchers, and there is a growing engagement in “trend analysis, publishing strategies, faculty reviews, grant writing, and job applications” (Corrall, Kennan, & Afzal, 2013, p.666). In the area of data management, libraries supported researchers in managing, curating data, disseminating and preserving data for researchers (Federer, 2013; MacMillan, 2014). There have been collaborative strategies developed for Open Access publishing in which libraries worked with presses and other departments of the university to combine digital repositories with scholarly publishing (Adema & Schmidt, 2010). These initiatives utilised strengths and skills of librarians in digitisation, publication reformatting, digital production (metadata and identifiers), developments of publication and dissemination channels or hosting e-research services, and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders of the university. Corrall’s study of 24 universities in the UK in 2014 further reported the developing role of libraries in providing specialised support for researchers and dedicated research services such as technology-rich reading space, peer support advisors for early career researchers or research profile matching (Corrall, 2014). However, the levels of library research support services varied significantly across universities in different countries. Further discussion of the challenges in these changing roles of librarians is discussed in section 2.3.2.

Collection development: This partnership involves joint activities in selecting, assessing, organising and weeding library materials. In contrast to the emerging literature of collaboration initiatives in the areas of information literacy and collaborative teaching, researchers in this area highlighted the factors and challenges of building a good relationship for the success of library collection development. Chu (1995, 1997) discussed various issues related to the challenges around the changing needs of disciplinary materials, shrinking budgets, quality of the collection, and the substance of collaboration. He found that collaboration focused more on procedures for collection development than on strategies for achieving substantive collections. Likewise, Shen (2012) discovered the disconnection between academics and library staff in collection development activities related to their differences in financial allocation priorities, goals, knowledge and expertise, and an academic divide. She proposed multilevel strategies to improve collaboration from the organisational to the individual level.

Application of technology: The evolution of technology and educational applications and mobile devices present new opportunities for collaboration in the online space. Dobozy and Gross (2010) described the collaborative project between a lecturer and a faculty librarian at Edith Cowan University, Australia, to embed library instruction modules on video, such as borrowing, education databases and search strategies, into Blackboard. Similarly, Edwards and Black (2012) and Leeder and Lonn (2013) presented the partnerships between library staff and academics in integrating library guides, podcasts, search demonstrations, forums and instant messaging into online courses. At the University of Utah, health science librarians worked
with faculty members on the development of a paediatric clerkship course using mobile devices and web-based collaboration tools for evidence-based material searching and journal evaluation (Le Ber & Lombardo, 2012).

In terms of the outcomes of collaboration practices, much of the literature has proven its multilevel benefits for university communities. In brief, the most significant effects of collaboration were found in the enhancement of student learning experiences such as improvement of critical thinking and research skills (Ellis & Beck, 2003; Sanborn, 2005; Stein & Lamb, 1998), information literacy skills (Floyd, Colvin, & Bodur, 2008; Matthies, 2004; Moore, Black, Glackin, Ruppel, & Watson, 2015), lifelong learning skills (Asher, 2003), and maintaining academic integrity (Gunnarsson, Kulesza, & Pettersson, 2014; Xiao, 2012).

With academics and librarians, collaboration facilitates the achievement of the educational mission of the university, transformation of the teaching and learning paradigm (Onda Bennett & Gilbert, 2009), different modes of course delivery (Stagg & Kimmins, 2012), transfer of knowledge and expertise across disciplines (Ellis & Beck, 2003; García-Milian et al., 2013; Wang, 2011), and improvement of research capacity and quality (Reynolds, Smith, & D'Silva, 2013). For the university as a whole, collaboration is strategically important to the development of libraries and the improvement of teaching, learning and research scholarship (Smith 2011). Figure 2.1 summarises these valuable outcomes of collaboration to universities as a whole, as well as to the academic and library communities in particular.

![Figure 2-1: Outcomes of collaboration between academics and librarians](image_url)

However, given these enormous benefits of collaboration, much of the literature has admitted the occurrence of various challenges and chronic issues in different organisations and contexts.
of collaboration. The next section examines the main factors that have influenced collaboration between academics and library staff.

2.3 Influencing factors on collaboration

Of the various factors influencing collaboration in organisations, the impact of structure and socio-culture, the changing roles of librarians, and the development of technology are explicitly stated as the most decisive factors that influence the success or failure of collaboration.

2.3.1 Structural, social and cultural impacts

Very few studies reported cases where the university has developed an essential structure which underpins collaboration activities between academics and library staff. Library and academics are separate entities in the university so there is no authority of either one over another (Chu, 1997). Thus, academics and librarians work independently, which makes collaboration happen on a more voluntary basis. A recent study of 221 academics in multiple disciplines at York University in Canada reported a very low level of participation of faculty members incorporating information literacy into the curriculum, although they were mostly aware of the availability of instruction (Bury, 2011). Bury indicated that York academics showed strong support for collaboration with the library, but in practice very few of them co-teach with librarians.

Overn (2014), Thull and Hansen (2009) and Wang (2011) believed that universities need to endorse an organisational structure to make collaboration between library and academics in teaching information literacy happen at university-wide level. However, to get the support of senior management, there would need to be “a meticulous effort that includes lobbying in meetings with the university leadership, arranging courses and seminars for teachers, meetings with students, teachers, administrators and various committees” (Overn, 2014, p. 49). Without top-down endorsement, lecturers and library staff only work together with information literacy as individuals (Thull & Hansen, 2009; Wang, 2011).

The lack of collaboration can also be observed by the physical and temporal separation between library and faculty. Christiansen et al. (2004) found that librarians mainly work in the library where they are based and for fixed working hours, whereas academics had much more flexibility in terms of their time and places to work. These divisions seemed to limit the interaction opportunities and mutual understanding between academics and librarians.

In a survey of the perception of academics toward library services, Library Journal Research and Gale Cengage Learning’s (2015) showed a disconnection between library service provision and the faculty needs in which library’s support of faculty research is perceived as most important by academics, whilst libraries rated instruction of students in information literacy the most essential. Interestingly, Ithaka S+R Faculty and Library Surveys 2015 (Wolff, Rod, & Schonfeld, 2016) showed contrasting findings with Library Journal Research and Gale Cengage Learning’s (2015). Wolff, Rod, & Schonfeld (2016) reported that there has been
significant increase in recognising the importance of the library role in teaching support, whilst research support related services appeared to be the least importance. However, the number of participants rated research support as highly important. These authors concluded that the library role has been changing significantly, particularly in developing research skills for students, thus continuing support for teaching and research is an important mission.

Another important barrier to collaboration was noted in the differences between academic and library cultures. A comprehensive review of faculty culture literature by Hardesty (1995) summarised the cultural attributes of academics that influenced collaboration with librarians, such as strong emphasis on research and specialised knowledge, de-emphasis of teaching, highly professional autonomy and academic freedom, lack of time, and resistance to change. Additional elements are independent, rigid possession of their subject expertise and research territory, and lack of trust in the librarian’s capabilities (Christiansen et al., 2004; Given & Julien, 2005; Julien & Given, 2013). Much of this literature seems to overemphasise the negative facets of academic culture rather than examining factors that impact and underpin its characteristics.

The study of librarians’ culture in terms of collaboration is less dramatic than with their academic counterparts, but different viewpoints can be noted. On the one hand, library culture is perceived as having more positive characteristics, such as being very responsive, pro-active and enthusiastic to work with faculty members (Chu, 1997) or being more sharing, corporative and collaborative (Christiansen et al., 2004). On the other hand, a study of 48 Canadian academic librarians by Julien and Pecoskie (2009) found that the perceptions of disrespect of librarians by academics was caused by “librarians’ self-positioning as defeated, passive, dependent and subordinate to teaching faculty” (p. 152) and by the university’s hierarchical culture. In a case of co-teaching information literacy with academics, librarians were found to prefer “more controlled and quiet classroom” than “noisy and messy” (Manuel, Beck, & Molloy, 2005). Saunders (2012) believed that the lack of academics’ receptiveness to working with librarians was more likely due to insufficient understanding of the librarians’ role in the teaching partnership than to a lack of respect.

Apart from the differences in their work cultures, there has been a debate about the misperceptions of academics and library staff of the work roles of their partners. The causes of these misunderstandings were stated as due to the consequences of the unequal power relationships between academics and librarians (Austin & Baldwin, 1992; Christiansen et al., 2004; Chu, 1997; Julien & Pecoskie, 2009); the adverse impact of the school’s culture and systemic factors such as conceptual, practical, attitudinal and professional barriers (Welch, 2000); the differences in goals, status, knowledge and expertise (Shen, 2012); and the chronic adverse impacts of the stereotypes of female librarians (Radford & Radford, 1997).

Librarians’ greatest concerns related to the negative attitude of faculty members towards working on educational activities with librarians. Librarians claimed that faculty staff considered them as subordinate rather than as equal partners, due to the low appreciation of librarians’ capacity for handling intellectual content (Awale-Ale, 2007; Given & Julien, 2005; Phelps & Campbell, 2012; Shen, 2012). Many librarians believed that academics’ perceptions
are influenced by the stereotypes of librarians working with mechanical tasks related to the library collection (Given & Julien, 2005; Walter, 2008). However, Phelps and Campbell (2012) noted that most of the literature discussing the perceptions of academics was reported by librarians and from the librarians’ perspective. By contrast, the research in this thesis explores the perceptions of both librarians and academics concerning their collaborative relationships, to gain a more rounded understanding from both points of view.

### 2.3.2 Changing roles of liaison librarians

Library liaison staff have experienced significant change to their role over the last twenty years. The major drive for the changing roles of librarians is the constant development of technology, significant changes in education systems, the changing needs of users and improvements in scholarly communication (Jain, 2013). To that end, the traditional liaison roles in giving bibliographic instruction within the library’s walls have expanded much further to fit with the changing needs of academics and students around library resources and research scholarship in both a physical and a digital learning environment. There has been a growing trend of embedded librarians working with faculty members to integrate information literacy and research skills into the curriculum and to provide enhanced research support services. Shumaker (2012) defined embedded librarianship as “a distinctive innovation that moves librarians out of libraries and creates a new model of library and information work” (p.25). This embedding role of librarians has necessitated more meaningful collaborative activities than providing general instruction and services that might not be of the faculties’ teaching, learning and research priority (Dewey, 2004). In academic research, the embedded librarians enabled integration of scholarly resources into research programs and publication success. In teaching and learning, the direct involvement of embedded librarians was seen in the integration of information literacy education into the discipline curriculum.

There has been a growing trend of librarians working with faculty members to embed information literacy and research skills into the curriculum and to provide enhanced research support services. Shumaker (2012) defined embedded librarianship as “a distinctive innovation that moves librarians out of libraries and creates a new model of library and information work” (p.25). This embedding role of librarians has necessitated more meaningful collaborative activities than providing general instruction and services that might not be of the faculties’ teaching, learning and research priority (Dewey, 2004). In academic research, the embedded librarians enabled integration of scholarly resources into research programs and publication success. In teaching and learning, the direct involvement of embedded librarians was seen in the integration of information literacy education into the discipline curriculum.

In a research study of 240 embedded librarians working in the educational sector, corporations and government, members of Special Library Association, Shumaker and Tyler (2007) identified three modes of embedded librarianship, i.e., physical embedding, organisational embedding and virtual embedding. Physical embedding referred to the proximity of embedded librarians to the user’s location to provide on-site reference services. This mode proved that face-to-face interaction was significant in networking with clients. Organisational embedding was a mode of management and funding for embedded librarians by clients to provide tailored services in their organisations. The virtual embedding referred to the embedding of library
services in virtual workspace of users. This was a trending mode in academic institutions. Embedded librarians creatively interacted with faculty to integrate electronic resources such as databases, online tutorials or chat services into the faculty’s course webpage (Drewes & Hoffman, 2010; Tumbleson, 2016). Technological innovations also enabled embedded librarians to deliver large sets of multimedia resources and to become involved in web-based collaboration with academic in e-science, particularly e-research (Kesselman & Watstein, 2009).

This paradigm shift reflects a broader role for librarians in higher education and research, underlying a strong need for collaboration with academics for teaching and integrating information literacy into the disciplines (Arendt & Lotts, 2012; Bewick & Corrall, 2010; García-Milian et al., 2013; Övern, 2014; Pham & Tanner, 2014, 2015; Rodwell & Fairbairn, 2008; Smith, 2011; Thompson, 2002), and for data management, bibliometrics, research communication and publishing, and e-research infrastructure (Corrall, Kennan, & Afzal, 2013; Library Journal Research and Gale Cengage Learning, 2015; Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, 2015). The current research focuses on collaboration between academics and librarians in teaching and educational activities.

The emerging role of liaison librarians in teaching has raised concerns and contrasting views among many authors about librarians’ professional roles and pedagogical knowledge (Asher, 2003; Bewick & Corrall, 2010; Scales, Matthews, & Johnson, 2005; Bell & Shank, 2004). Asher (2003) found the attempt to turn librarians into academics who teach in the subject disciplines to be a “destructive trend of library science”. He argued for a clear delineated boundary between librarians’ and academics’ knowledge, since validating students’ ideas and understandings of subject disciplines are not part of librarians’ expertise. Bell and Shank (2004) also acknowledged the deficit of pedagogical knowledge, teaching theories and design among library professionals. They found that librarianship education has prepared librarians for a more practical profession rather than becoming an integral part of academia. Nevertheless, research conducted by Bewick and Corrall (2010) with 82 subject librarians in UK institutions showed librarians had a high level of confidence in teaching and incorporating information literacy modules into education programs. Övern (2014) also reported a case of a successful teaching librarian in the two faculties’ programs who impressed the academics with their subject knowledge and information literacy expertise. It seems that librarians have been focusing on building capacity to cope with such challenges and changes in their roles to be able to work more effectively with academics.

Issues related to the quality of communication of the librarians’ role to academics were also raised by a number of authors (Arendt & Lotts, 2012; Chu, 1997; García-Milian et al., 2013; Gilbert, 2009; Manuel et al., 2005; Scales et al., 2005). Chu (1997) and García-Milian et al. (2013) emphasized that the major challenge of communication was more likely happen in a collaboration group of staff with different disciplinary backgrounds. In a number of co-teaching cases, academics reported miscommunication and misdirection with librarians in planning training sessions, which caused problems in instructional approach and misuse of information resources required for the courses (Manuel et al., 2005). Scales et al. (2005) gave evidence of the lack of shared teaching language and jargon as an emerging difficulty, causing
much misunderstanding and disruption among academics and librarians when they worked together in an information literacy course revision project.

Nevertheless, most studies of collaboration investigated issues related to the teaching roles of librarians from the librarians’ perspectives only.

### 2.3.3 Development of technology

The most widely used social technologies for collaboration in libraries are Web 2.0 applications. Really Simple Syndication (RSS), blogs, social networking sites (such as Facebook or LinkedIn), wikis, instant messaging, vodcasts (video podcasts) and media sharing (such as YouTube) have become the most popular technologies adopted in libraries (Mahmood & Richardson, 2013). An investigation of 57 university library websites from the top 200 universities in the world, by Harinarayana and Raju (2010), reported that Facebook was the most popular networking site in those libraries. At the University of Texas, the library catalogue, the means to chat with librarians, and vodcasts were embedded into the Library’s Facebook interface. Along with the use of Facebook and Twitter for marketing purposes, library staff at California State University produced a successful video streaming series on the Library’s YouTube channel, to further promote library resources and services to academic staff.

Besides the use of social collaborative tools for communicating general library resources and learning support, learning management systems have become a sought-after workspace where library staff and academics can work together to help students with specific course-related needs. Tailoring and embedding library instruction, information literacy, research skills and course-related resources into online learning management systems have been a growing trend in universities. Xiao (2010, 2012) presented three examples of a collaborative course model between academics and librarians in which research and information literacy skills were seamlessly embedded into the Blackboard learning management system in faculties of nursing, education and liberal studies at the City University of New York. In these cases, faculty members added the liaison librarian to their Blackboard courses and worked with her in designing and integrating course-specific resources, library database instruction, style guides, and research skills tutorials on how to avoid plagiarism using the Turnitin plagiarism detection software. The outcome of this collaboration project highlighted the importance of librarian participation in collaborative curriculum development to enhance students’ learning experiences by using technologies and educational resources in their courses.

In brief, this section has demonstrated the main influencing factors related to structure, culture, the changing roles of librarians and the development of technology on collaboration between academics and library staff in the universities around the world. The next sections further elaborate contextual aspects of this collaboration in Australian and Vietnamese universities.
2.4 Collaboration between academics and library staff in Australian universities

As indispensible components of universities, Australian academic libraries have experienced the same impulse as their parent institutions during the transformation of the higher education system. The macro-level changes in the governance, structure, and technology developments have been considered as both challenges and opportunities to optimize resources and services to benefit wide communities of users (Becker, 2006; Jensen & Guha, 1995; Richards, 2008). Australian university libraries have developed common strategies to deal with professional and business issues that help them maintain their critical roles in the educational process (Austen et al., 2002).

The structural changes have exerted major impacts on the organization and management of academic libraries. Following the mergers of parent institutions, the majority of academic libraries have been set into the context of amalgamated campuses in which there exists a central library and branch libraries that are not only geographically separated but hold different values and missions (Becker, 2006). The widespread distances have also presented physical and fiscal challenges for both institutions and their libraries (Bundy, 2012). Similar geographical constraints impact on libraries in supporting the increasingly widespread development of distance education and online teaching. A major priority has been collaborative attempts to support and facilitate faster access to library resources for remote students (Bundy, 2012).

The movement to a digital learning environment and the changing needs of students in terms of space for searching and using information have promoted the transformation of library space to a more sophisticated design with specific configuration for study spaces, social spaces and service desks within the learning commons (Bailin, 2011). Another prominent alteration of the library structures that demonstrates their central role in the university community has been the integration of learning services into the library setting (Smith, 2011). This transformation reflects the significance of the interconnection between learning skills and information literacy as well as the interrelated roles between librarians and learning advisers for the development of lifelong learning skills for students (Smith, 2011).

The structural model of a group of subject/liaison librarians and academic skills advisers working in partnership within a particular discipline has become a more popular approach in Australian universities (Rodwell & Fairbairn, 2008; Smith, 2011). Their areas of collaboration are varied: from collection development to strategic planning (Dickson, 2004), policy partnerships, research and scholarship partnership, curriculum and academic development for teaching and learning information literacy that matches the graduate attributes, capability-building for staff (Bruce, 2001), and e-research support services such as repositories for data management (Kennan, Williamson, & Johanson, 2012). Among these, the integration of information literacy and research skills development into the educational process is the most notable emerging area in current academic–library collaboration in Australia. A good example of a curriculum integrated information and research skills program was the “Learning for life: the information literacy framework and syllabus” at the Queensland University of Technology (Hart, McCarthy, & Peacock, 2003). This was a coordinated support services collaboratively
developed by the library, information technology services and the teaching and learning support services. The program consisted of various learning programs, online tutorials, technology literacy development tools and life long learning syllabus, based on an integration continuum framework at three levels: Coordinated support services, Integrated support services and Embedded disciplinary learning framework.

These collaborative programs have reflected the shift of librarians’ central roles in providing general training on information skills to the shared responsibilities of librarians and academics in integrating and teaching these skills inside the curriculum (Dearden, 2005; Thompson, 2002; Wang, 2011). The librarian role has been conceptualized as an agent of change in the academic community for the transformation of teaching and learning methods (Bundy, 1997; Candy, Crebert, & O’Leary, 1994). It has been further extended as a teacher or an educator to reflect the shift of their responsibilities from bibliographical instructor to information literacy teacher (Doskatsch, 2003; Doyle, 1994; Lupton, 2002).

However, the emerging role of an educator who jointly works with academics in designing and teaching information and research skills has presented a key challenge for librarians. There has been opposition to the teaching roles of librarians, thus raising the need to enhance librarian expertise in teaching (Nimon, 2002; Thompson, 2002), as well as the lack of awareness of librarians’ role in research support (Corrall, 2014). Rodwell and Fairbairn (2008) believe that librarians need to develop their knowledge in a specific discipline together with their professional expertise. They have called for research to investigate the expectations of academics for librarians as well as the specific attributes and skills that a liaison librarian needs to develop.

Very few universities report the successful integration of information literacy and research skills into the curriculum at the university-wide level. A successful program requires a high level of commitment from academics, librarians and other study, advice or support units who need to work collaboratively in program design and planning (Nayda, 2009; Thompson, 2002). There has been inadequate promotion among academics of information literacy as one of the established graduate attributes (White & Long, 2001). White and Long also found that some academics have opposed the integration of information literacy into the subject content which caused a lack of support and awareness of the program in the faculty. Given much of the effort has been made by librarians in forming the partnership with academics, Rader (2002) critically concluded in her literature review of information literacy from 1973 to 2002 that “success often eluded them”.

Doskatsch (2003) believed that various challenges still exist for the profession including unrealistic expectations of librarians in terms of teaching capabilities, institutional structure issues, resource constraints, staff development, managing change and sustaining achievement, losing library professional identity, and particularly the poor effects of female librarian stereotypes which prevailed in movies and television in the past. It should also be noted that librarianship is a strongly female-dominated profession in Australia (Hallam, 2009).
Feast (2003) raised the importance of management support in overcoming the inhibiting factors that have hindered the success of integrating information literacy skills in teaching and learning strategies such as colleagues’ attitudes, the increase in student/staff ratio, the lack of infrastructure and resource support, poor administrative support and the issue of the extra workload. The process of reconceptualising the institutional structures and work arrangements to create a new university learning and teaching environment that supports the integration of information literacy into the curriculum is very challenging (George & Luke, 1996). There is a call for institutional strategic policies for staff development when the participation of librarians into course units often demands additional capacity, constrains resources and requires dedicated time (Callan, 2001). A further question for executive leaders of universities is how to sustain the achievement, commitment and resources for the long-term development of the educational agenda (Callan, 2001; Dickson, 2004).

Overall, academics and librarians in Australian universities have faced various challenges caused by the transformation of education systems, changes of governance and management, and gaps in social perceptions about the roles of librarians. These challenges have direct impacts on their work practice and efforts to participate in a collaborative relationship.

2.5 Collaboration between academics and library staff in Vietnamese universities

Collaboration between academics and librarians in Vietnamese universities has received limited attention in the literature. The focus of scholarly resources is on major changes in education systems, particularly the significant changes in the government policies for curriculum innovation, standardisation in education quality, development of information technology and infrastructure, and new international collaboration programs in tertiary education. To give insight into collaboration matters, major factors of the library development and changes, socio-cultural systems and contextual challenges in Vietnamese universities are explored.

Having benefited from higher education reform, academic libraries gradually began their innovation and modernization from the late 1990s. The shifting process has faced various chronic library development challenges including poor infrastructure, shortage of funds, lack of expertise, lack of standardization, the closed-stack material organization system, inadequate user services, the poor match between resources and curriculum, out-dated technology and information management systems or the lack of qualified staff (Robinson, 2006; L. Tran, 1999). At the same time, the system has gained more adequate attention and investment from the government and foreign donors. A large number of library projects have been implemented in targeted development areas such as automation, infrastructure, cataloguing standardization, Internet and information systems, capacity-building for librarians, and user-training programs.

One of the early successful library development initiatives that can be seen as a breakthrough in improving the understanding of the operational model of a Western standard library by the Vietnamese academic library community, was a project suite funded by the international Atlantic Philanthropies organization to build Learning Resource Centres at four regional
Chapter 2 - Literature review

universities across the country in the early 2000s. The project outcomes have contributed to the development of regional academic library resources as well as catalysing changes in library approaches to teaching and learning activities at these universities (Robinson, 2006). Further, the Library Resource Centres project has exerted a visionary influence upon many interested university libraries. They subsequently gained various types of development funds from the government’s Higher Education Projects for their library construction and design, IT infrastructure and systems, resource development, library services, training to users and professional development.

Another achievement in the development of academic libraries in Vietnam was the issue in 2006 of the Vietnamese translation and adaptation of three main cataloguing standards i.e., Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) and MARC (Machine-readable cataloging) to support libraries in organizing information and operating the automated systems. The project has shown enormous effort by devoted Vietnamese and foreign librarians and library experts to accommodate the differences in Vietnam’s specificities of politics, economics, society, history, geography, language and culture, etc., with Western (or American) systems. The success is very significant not only in the conversion process from the traditional Soviet style closed-stack library to an open-access system, but also in developing basic competencies for academic librarians in Vietnam to cope with future changes of resources management amidst the proliferation of electronic resources.

An important impact in the development of university libraries in Vietnam is the promotion of the Internet, from the development of IT to the application of Web technology in recent years. Starting from a very low level of IT infrastructure in the early 2000s, mostly with the CDS/ISIS software funded by UNESCO run in local area networks (LAN), a number of academic libraries now employ library automation software capable of organising both print and electronic resources, or have developed open-source library software to manage digital collections. The current application of Web technology for libraries is basically at Web 1.0 generation (Hoang Son Nguyen, 2011). Web 2.0 was found to be just starting in a few exceptional libraries, whilst the concept of Web 3.0 seemed new to most of the libraries (Hoang, 2011). Despite a number of limitations of infrastructure, systems, budget and expertise, the current technology changes have exerted a positive impact on the traditional perceptions of both librarians as resource managers, as well as teachers and students as users who are now able to directly access information.

One innovative role that academic libraries in Vietnam have taken with the introduction of open access libraries and electronic resources is to deliver training programs for library orientation and online catalogue searching to library users. These programs are often compulsory requirements for student users with an aim to deliver basic knowledge and skills to use the new library model which most students have had no experience of in their high school libraries. However, the significance of information literacy and learning skills training for those novice users has gained inadequate attention from the majority of libraries. According to X. H. Pham (2008), issues of poor information literacy instructional materials, lack of leadership and administrative support, and the traditional teaching and learning styles have currently
hampered the successful implementation of programs across all the faculties in Vietnamese universities.

Capacity-building for library professionals seems a critical area that has gained significant attention from the researchers of library development in Vietnam. The shortage of qualified library staff capable of managing the newly developed library systems or providing professional training to junior staff has been a major challenge for most academic libraries, especially in regional areas (Denison & Robinson, 2004; Huynh, Huynh, & Hoang, 2011; X. H. Pham, 2007). One of the original causes of this problem is the chronically out-dated library science education curriculum, which mostly provides traditional knowledge and skills for librarians to work in the closed-stack library systems. Based on a thorough study and extensive knowledge of library education in Vietnam, L. A. Tran (2001) has proposed a detailed curriculum developed from similar courses taught in Western countries, with considerable revision for local library schools in Vietnam. Her curriculum framework focused on developing essential background knowledge and skills for library graduates to cope with the constant development of IT and to deliver electronic resource services. However, there has been no report on the application of her proposed curriculum.

Most recently, Hong Sinh Nguyen, Dorner, and Gorman (2011) attempted to identify the gap between the LIS curriculum and the current practices to develop a model of continuing education for library practitioners. After interviewing ten university library managers and 17 groups of operational staff, they found their learning needs ranged from very basic to an advanced level of library service management. They then proposed a continuing education framework in which professional and management skills at different prioritized levels of training are to be provided to suit the learning needs of specific groups of operational staff and library managers.

Despite the significant innovation in various areas of education and library development as well as the strategic proposals to improve the research and learning skills for the university communities, academics and librarians in Vietnamese universities are mostly working independently of each other. Collaborative activities have been modestly undertaken in the areas of materials acquisition, information services and training, materials organization for academic collections, and research projects. The partnership between educators and librarians who can provide essential resources to support teaching and learning activities have been inadequately established (Diep & Nahl, 2011; X. H. Pham, 2007).

X. H. Pham (2008) conducted a survey to study the perceptions of academics and librarians in the implementation of information literacy at seven universities in Vietnam and found that the lack of collaboration between academics and librarians was one of the major factors challenging the performance of information literacy programs at these institutions. Findings from more recent research by Diep and Nahl (2011), examining the delivery of information literacy at four newly developed libraries, showed that the level of collaboration between academics and librarians is too low to support the integration of information literacy into the curriculum. The partnerships were mostly initiated by librarians and based on personal
contacts. Diep also claimed that “building this kind of relationship had just begun and no major steps had been taken to enhance communication” (Diep, 2011, p. 203).

There has been very little research into possible factors that cause such a limited degree of collaboration between academics and librarians in Vietnam. In order to understand the challenges of collaboration, the complex variables which involve “perception, values, expectations, assumptions, behaviours, structures, processes and outcomes” need to be acknowledged (Kraus, 1980). Therefore, examining how these associated values influence the relationship between academics and librarians within the specific context of Vietnamese university education is important for understanding the nature, the structures and the consequences of this partnership.

Since the majority of Vietnamese library practitioners are female (Huynh et al., 2011), their perceptions are likely to be influenced by traditional social factors. In a study about continuing education for library staff, Hong Sinh Nguyen (2008) discovered that the traditional perception of women’s main role as a carer of family and children was dominant, despite the rapid development of society. To meet society’s expectations, women are prepared to miss out on opportunities for higher learning. In the public perception, the stereotype of a librarian as a bookkeeper shelving in the old wooden stacks has prevailed. Along with the issues of gender inequality, the lower appreciation of women’s work role in the family, and the lack of advantages in accessing professional development opportunities offered to females compared to males, impose certain limitations on the development of a library career.

Working in the academic environment, but not having been granted academic status, makes library work very challenging and largely dependent on the support of university administrators. Diep (2011) highlighted insufficient support from university leaders, administrators and faculty as the most critical factors limiting librarians’ capacity to undertake a library initiative. They were not able to develop specific information literacy programs to meet the needs of students from different faculties. The limited appreciation of their jobs, qualifications and competencies among the academic community has left their important role in supporting teaching and learning activities unrecognized (Hong Sinh Nguyen 2008). However, it should be noted that there is a gap in the perceptions of librarians and academics about each other’s working conditions. The overload of teaching activities has constrained academics from taking on any additional work.

The issues of limited funding, low income and library personnel management are significant related factors that need to be addressed at all levels. The limitations of government funding have an overall impact on all the areas of library development ranging from infrastructure and facilities, IT applications and systems, resources and services, and standardization, to human resource development. The very low income and occupational benefits for librarians have long been criticized as reasons for the shortage of qualified librarians and low motivation for professional development (Huynh et al., 2011). This low pay policy was a result of the low professional status of librarians in the public mind (Murray & Welch, 2009).
Facing more challenges than favourable conditions, academic libraries in Vietnam are in need of improved professional capacity to enable them to reach out to and to form collaborative relationships with academics. The competencies of most librarians regarding the changing nature of the library profession in terms of its resources, services, technology, standards, processes and user demands are relatively low (Murray & Welch, 2009). Diep and Nahl (2011) found the limited knowledge of the faculty’s subject also has a negative effect on the ability of librarians to work effectively with academics in teaching students about information and research skills. Their survey results also highlighted a lack of appreciation by academics of the pedagogical expertise of librarians in the delivery of information literacy programs. Moreover, many librarians were unfamiliar with the concepts of resource-based learning or life-long learning skills (X. H. Pham, 2007). Communication skills, teamwork skills, knowledge of a foreign language and IT applications skills were other professional attributes that have been proposed in order to foster improvements among Vietnamese librarians (Hong Sinh Nguyen, 2008; B. Welch & Murray, 2010).

Given these various challenges to academic libraries, collaboration between academics and librarians at the Vietnamese universities as observed by the researcher varied by a great extent. At some universities, the relationship is still traditionally occurring in some collection development activities, whilst in others particularly the ones that have library schools, the concepts of information literacy and collaboration are better known. However, there is a paucity of literature studying this relationship.

2.6 The similarities and differences of collaboration between academics and librarians in Australian and Vietnamese universities

Both Australian and Vietnamese academics and librarians face a variety of opportunities and challenges in working collaboratively. To a great extent, their interaction has been influenced by structural, socio-cultural and technological factors that could be either enablers of or constraints on their relationship. Table 2-2 summarises the similarities and the differences of those factors in the context of Australian and Vietnamese universities.
Table 2-2: Comparison of participants, contexts and challenges of collaboration between academics and librarians in Australian and Vietnamese universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Australian universities</th>
<th>Vietnamese universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Academics, librarians, academic skill advisors, study/course advisors, unit coordinators, tutors, administrators, executive leaders.</td>
<td>Academics, librarians, faculty administrators, and executive leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Library resources development.</td>
<td>Library resources development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>context</td>
<td>Facilitating resources discovery and access.</td>
<td>Facilitating resources discovery and access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrating and teaching information literacy, research skills, and academic skills into the curriculum.</td>
<td>Information literacy training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research, scholarship and policy partnerships.</td>
<td>Research and scholarship partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity building for staff.</td>
<td>Capacity building for staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Macro-level changes in the governance, structure, and technology developments.</td>
<td>Higher education reform, from Soviet education system to Western style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate infrastructure and facilities, but facing more budget constraints.</td>
<td>Poor infrastructure and facilities, lack of standardization, limited budget and less qualified staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing mutual effort to initiate the collaborative relationship, but still requiring higher level of commitment from staff involved.</td>
<td>Lack of mutual effort to initiate the collaborative relationship, low level of commitment from staff involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female dominated profession. Still being influenced by traditional stereotypes about librarianship, which leads to poor recognition of librarians’ role in teaching, learning and research activities.</td>
<td>Female dominated profession. Heavily influenced by traditional stereotypes about librarianship, which leads to very poor recognition of librarians’ role in teaching, learning and research activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of awareness from academics about librarians’ subject knowledge and teaching expertise.</td>
<td>Lack of respect by academics for the competency and subject knowledge of librarians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensification of teaching workload, expanded role, various modes of course delivery, technological change and research productivity.</td>
<td>Heavy teaching workload, passive teaching methods, rigid curriculum, low teaching motivation, and low research productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constraints of the institutional structures such as highly regulated mechanisms, low management support, time and resource constraints.</td>
<td>Constraints of the institutional structures such as insufficient management support, lack of qualified staff, low income, time and resource constraints.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main insights 2.2, 2.3, 2.4:

The most significant areas of collaboration activities happen in teaching partnership, research partnership, collection development, and implementation of technology. Of these, teaching partnership is the most widely reported activity involving teaching and integrating information and research literacy skills into the curriculum.

Various issues of collaboration between academics and library staff globally relate to structural, social and cultural elements along with challenges of the changing role for librarians and constant development of information technology have been practically discussed.

Collaboration in Australian universities highlights challenges of macro-level changes in the governance, structure, and technology developments, as well as constraints in the perception of librarians’ role in the partnership.

Challenges to collaboration in Vietnamese universities include poor infrastructure, shortage of funds, lack of expertise, low income, lack of standardization, low research motivation, along with the impacts of traditional teaching culture and outdated perceptions of librarians’ role.

2.7 Conclusion

Collaboration between academics and library staff is perceived as a challenging process facing various problems related to structural complexity, power asymmetry, socio-cultural differences, the changing nature of work, resources constraints, and the rapid development of technology. These perceptions, however, have been mainly discussed among library practitioners, which emphasises a lack of empirical research studying the phenomena from both academics’ and librarians’ perspectives. This research seeks to help fill this gap.

This chapter has elucidated important collaboration concepts and key factors influencing collaboration between academics and library staff. It has reviewed key characteristics and influencing factors of collaboration in particular contexts of Australian and Vietnamese universities to assist addressing the research problem in practice.

The next chapter, chapter 3 evaluates the structuration theory of Giddens (1984) and the duality of technology theory of Orlikowski (1992a) for relevant contributions to this research. Chapters 2 and 3 thus provide background knowledge to guide the research design which is presented in Chapter 4.
3 Theoretical frameworks

Based on the findings of the literature review of collaboration, the current research seeks to apply structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) as the primary theoretical lens for explicating some of the complex dynamics at play in collaboration between academics and librarians. Giddens’ theory has been seen as a resolution of traditional dualistic views of the division between structure and agency. His theory offers an important theoretical lens for the deeper understanding of organisation and management issues from both the broader structural and individual action perspectives. Given that technology is an area that is implicit more than explicit in Giddens’ work, a supplementary theory, Orlikowski’s duality of technology theory (Orlikowski, 1992a), which builds on structuration theory, is being used in the analysis of the role of technology in collaboration. This chapter examines the two theories in detail.

3.1 Structuration theory

This section examines key concepts of structuration theory, and discusses the relevance and shortcomings of the theory in empirical research.

3.1.1 The main elements of structuration theory

Structuration theory, developed by Giddens (1984), seeks to bridge the conceptual divide between objectivist and subjectivist social theory: the former emphasising society and the impacts of macro-level, largely uncontrollable social forces, and the latter, at the micro-level, the individual human agent. In rejecting such dichotomies and focusing simultaneously on society and the human agent, Giddens’ theory integrates various fields of social science. His structuration theory reconceptualises the dualism of “individuals” and “society” as the duality of “agency” and “structure” (p. 162). In Giddens’ theory, individuals’ actions structure society and are in turn structured by society through social practices. Social phenomena should be studied from both epistemological and ontological perspectives as it is neither simply the creation of individual agents, nor society but is recursively produced and reproduced by agents’ actions across time and space (Giddens, 1984).

Structuration theory seeks to explain how modern societies are constituted, reproduced and transformed, and how social practices extend across time–space. Structure refers to “the structuring properties allowing the “binding” of time–space in social systems, the properties of which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across various spans of time and space, and which lend them “systemic” form” (Giddens, 1984, p. 17). In other words, for Giddens, relations of time and space existed in all moments of social change and social production (Lars, 2000). Social activity involves reciprocity between actors embedded in a particular temporal and spatial context; such a context impacts on the nature of social interaction. Temporality encompasses concepts such as flow of life, routines, events,
individual life-spans, institutional and generational time-spans, continuity and change. The spatial dimension refers to place or setting of interaction; an individual, with various social roles, interacts in multiple locales (Giddens 1984).

Central to structuration theory is the notion of human agency, the capability of people to engage in purposive actions, with both intended and unintended consequences. Giddens defines human actors as knowledgeable agents who have competency to utilize resources and control other people in purposive interaction contexts. Human actors base their interaction on their existing knowledge about the world, their capabilities and social rules of conduct. Their interaction carries intentions, meanings, power and consequences that lead to changes in the structures that govern their actions. Agents are simultaneously autonomous, involving a continuous flow of activities that are reflexively monitored, and constrained by dependence on a social collective.

The concept of actors’ knowledgeability is crucial to the constitution of structure since the existence of structure is recognized through knowledge, social interaction and other human capabilities (Giddens, 1979, p. 64). Giddens (1979, 1984) used a stratification model to describe the reflexivity process of human action and distinguished three levels of an actor’s knowledge: unconscious cognition, practical consciousness (tacit knowledge) and discursive consciousness (explicit knowledge). The level of unconscious recognition takes place in actions “caused by unconscious motive” (Lars, 2000, p. 36), while at the practical consciousness level, human agents are knowledgeably able to understand social and cultural conventions and have the capacity to act effectively and appropriately in a given situation. Discursive consciousness refers to the ability of human actors to reflect and explicitly articulate grounds for their action. Of the three levels, practical consciousness that takes account of tacit knowledge is critically important for the production of society (Lars, 2000).

In contrast to common usage of the term “structure” in the English-speaking world, where structure is conceptualised as “some given form”, Giddens’ concept of structure in structuration theory has quite different connotations (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p. 76). Rather than saying social systems have structures, in structuration theory it is more a case of social systems exhibiting structural properties. Structure is embodied, existing “only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action” (Giddens 1984, p. 377). Giddens’ theory of structuration emphasises that social life is a product of the active flow of ongoing activities and practices that people undertake, and such recurrent practices reproduce institutions of the society (Giddens & Pierson, 1998). According to Giddens’ notion of duality of structure, structural properties such as rules (procedures, conventions) and resources (allocative resources and authoritative resources) are embedded in action and are implicated in the production and reproduction of social systems; they are “both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize” (Giddens, 1984, p. 374). The process in which the actions of human agents both structure society and are structured by society through social practices is defined by Giddens as structuration.

In other words, structuration is the process of structuring social relations across time and space, whereby structures are either reinforced and continued or, alternately, transmuted or changed. In the theory of structuration, structure or structural properties of social systems are
the medium and outcome of the human actions accomplished to produce social life in a situated context (Giddens, 1982). Unlike many traditional social theorists, Giddens contends that the structure of a social system does not just constrain human actions, but is also enabling.

The extent to which asymmetries of power can constrain or enable actions depends on the position of the agent(s) within the social system. Giddens uses the term duality of structure to describe the mutual relationship between human actions and the structure of society. Structuration dimensions include patterns of communication (signification), the exercise of power (domination, involving the capacity to act and utilise or control resources), and norms of social behaviour (rules, sanctions, the means of legitimation) (Stillman & Stoecker, 2004; Timbrell, Delaney, Chan, Yue, & Gable, 2005). Giddens (1979, 1984) differentiated these structuration dimensions mainly for the purpose of analysing the interrelationships of social institutions. Human interaction mediates and is mediated by all of these interrelated structures, referred as the modalities of structure.

The structures of signification mediate human communication via the rules embedded in the interpretative schemes, the knowledge of the world upon which actors base their interaction. Closely connected with signification in structuring human action, domination forms and is reformed by the capabilities of actors in utilizing existing resources to influence the conduct of other individuals or groups. Legitimation orders of interaction coordinate different aspects of domination in determining the sanctioning features of human conduct governed by norms. Berends, Boersma, and Weggeman (2003) illustrated an interesting use of these modalities of structure in their research of organisational learning through social practices. They gave an example of how structures enable and constrain the work practices of a technical team that needed to deal with the issues of equipment (resources) based on their knowledge (interpretive rules). Their actions were also mediated by the capabilities of other team members (domination) who drew upon different sets of rules to act differently in order to change the practice (legitimation). Berends, Boersma and Weggeman’s empirical analysis of the organisational learning process reaffirmed that structure does not only enable and constrain practice, but also reproduces it over time through the same practice.

3.1.2 Giddens’ theory and empirical research

Giddens’ theory has become an influential theoretical framework used in information system and organisation research (Jones & Karsten, 2008; Poole, 2009; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2005; Rose & Scheepers, 2001). Orlikowski (1992a) was a pioneering information systems scholar who significantly extended the application of structuration theory specifically for information technology studies. Her duality of technology theory focuses on the influences of structure and technology and explores the dynamic interactions between technology, institutional structures and people in an organisational context. Likewise, Poole (2009) expounded an adaptive structuration theory for studying the roles of advanced technology in providing and enacting structure in human interaction with technology, which leads to organisation change.
Research in library and information science, knowledge management and education has been increasingly informed by structuration theory. The theory has been found valuable in addressing research problems and achieving important findings in the areas of information seeking and use in various social and organisational contexts (Rosenbaum, 2010), and information behaviours and information practices (Huvila, 2013). In LIS education, Ma (2010) believed that structuration theory provided a useful theoretical lens for understanding the interrelationship between the work practices of information professionals and social structures. Stillman and Stoecker (2004) acknowledged the role of structuration theory in explaining social and cultural values in community information and knowledge management. They found the duality of structure to be a particularly powerful framework in studying the qualities of human relationships, which were recurrently influenced by the production and reproduction of structure. Pang (2008) valued the relevance of structuration theory in viewing structure as both the medium and outcome of human action and the distinction of unconscious, tacit and discursive knowledge in understanding the nature of human interaction in situated contexts. These central notions of the theory were found to be significant in her research of the interplay of knowledge commons, communities and participatory design in creating and sharing knowledge in the public libraries and museums of Australia and Singapore. In addition, Broady-Preston (2009) advocated the use of structuration theory in discovering the boundaries and scopes of the information profession in association with professional skills and capabilities, knowledge base of the profession and professionalism. The theory was viewed as an important instrument to explore the concepts of change, professional constraints and identify.

Interestingly, structuration theory has been described as a thorough framework by researchers for studying the influences of culture in information system and organisation research. In structuration theory, structural properties of culture can be conceptualised as shared meaning systems, power relations, norms and values which are embedded in human minds, and can be viewed differently by individuals within the same context (Walsham, 2002). Walsham believed that structuration theory supports a profounder examination of complex cross-cultural influences in information systems and organisations than Hofstede’s (1980) theory of national culture, particularly in analysing cultural conflicts and diversity and dynamics. Myers and Avison (2002) further emphasised that the rigid alignment of cultural dimensions (i.e. power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism and masculinity–femininity), with national territorial boundaries makes Hofstede’s theory unsophisticated in accommodating the dynamic nature of culture, in which “cultural groups can exist across many nations” (p. 24). Research in organisational issues of groupware implementation by Orlikowski (1991) also reported evidence of the existence of different cultural and work norms in different groups of employees of the same organisation or organisations with a similar structure.

Although structuration theory has been extensively used in empirical research, yielding valuable findings and new insights into the impacts of social structure on human behaviours and interaction, it has encountered criticisms for being theoretically abstract in the explanation of social phenomena in empirical enquiries or its overemphasis on ontology rather than epistemology (Gregson, 1987; Silva, 2007; Thrift, 1985). In reply to these critics, Giddens has maintained his position that structuration theory is not a research method, but rather “an eclectic approach to method, which again rests upon the premise that the research enquiries
are contextually oriented” (Held & Thompson, 1989, p. 296). He specifically referred to the key aspects and guidelines for empirical analysis proposed in the final chapter of his *Constitution of Society* (1984), which emphasised that social research needs to be sensitive to: the importance of the double hermeneutic characteristics of social science (cultural and ethnographic aspects); the complex skills of actors in social interaction (methodological bracketing for institutional analysis level); and time and space as contextual features of constitution of social life.

Giddens further illustrated some key theoretical notions of structuration theories that Willis (1977) in *Learning to Labour* successfully applied in his research of the negative behaviours and attitudes of a group of school students against the school systems and the consequences of their actions. Giddens believed that the main structuration concepts, such as the duality of structure, structural constraints, knowledgeable agents (who own both tacit and discursive knowledge to act upon structure), unintended consequences of actions, or power and punitive sanctions, were sensitively used by Willis, yielding significant implications beyond the study context (Giddens, 1984). In a later reply to critics, Giddens reaffirmed that structuration theory should be selectively applied rather than being imported as “en bloc” concepts in empirical research; and the theory should be utilized as a “sensitising device” rather than as a research method (Held & Thompson, 1989, p. 294).

### 3.1.3 Proposed contribution of structuration theory

The review of literature in the previous chapter has demonstrated strong structural and social factors that have influenced the outcomes of collaboration between academics and library staff in various contexts. From a structurationist perspective, collaboration can be viewed as a structuration process in which the social interaction between academics and librarians is structured by society and their interaction changes the existing structure. Structuration theory therefore, was proposed to be used as a “sensitising device” informing the conduct of this empirical study from the stage of collecting and analysing data to the development of theoretical concepts and the framework of collaboration. The theory provides a theoretical lens for the study of collaboration contexts and the influences of power, culture and social identities on academics and library staff in their collaboration, and how their interactions produce impacting changes on these social structures.

Since structuration theory resolves the division of determinist and voluntarist views of structure and agency, applications of the theory for social analysis are useful in examining social phenomena from both macro and micro levels (Lars, 2000; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2005). Two levels of analysis are involved: a broader institutional analysis of the structural properties of the social system on collaboration practices between academics and library staff, and a more focused analysis of how collaborators draw on these structures, rules and resources in their social interaction. Particular emphasis is on patterns of collaboration activities, the changes in a variety of structural, social and cultural forms, and how the stock of knowledge upon which collaborators draw to act enables and constrains their collaboration practice. The analysis of structure of social interaction should be recognized integrally with the specified time and geographical distance, explaining the ways and reasons for the
chronological and geographical transmissions of different patterns of social system (Stillman & Stoecker, 2004).

3.2 The duality of technology

Since the influence of technology on organisational practices was not explicitly addressed in the theory of structuration, Orlikowski’s (1992a) duality of technology theory was utilised as an additional and complementary theoretical lens in the current research. This study used the duality of technology theory to examine the role of technology on collaboration practice between academics and library staff in the university environment.

3.2.1 Technology, people and institutional structure in social practices

Orlikowski (1991) advocated the centrality of technology in the constitution of social practices. The deployment of technology in the organization’s work process has enabled the improvement of organisation management various forms of cultural, personal, social structural and technical management and the patterns of organizational structures. Based on Giddens’ theory of structuration, Orlikowski (1992a) aimed to construct a structuration framework with further implications on the mediating role of technology in organizational practices and the relationship between technology and organization. Orlikowski named her theory “the duality of technology” to reflect the recursive interaction between organisations and technology. “Technology is created and changed by human action, yet it is also used by humans to accomplish some action” (Orlikowski, 1992a, p. 405). Her theory focuses on the roles and influences of technology and explores the dynamic interactions between technology, institutional structures and people in an organisational context. According to the duality of technology theory, technology is socially constructed by and for people and is reconstructed by human actors through its use in social practices. It can both enable and constrain human actions in social practices. People’s interaction with technology is structured by institutional rules and resources, and their actions and reactions to technology contribute to the shape of institutional structure. The duality of technology theory is grounded in four main interrelated interactions occurring among technology, people and institutional structure in social practices.

i. Technology is seen as a product of human action implicated in the process of design, development, appropriation, and modification of technology in organisations.

ii. Technology is seen as a medium of human action that can either facilitate or constrain social interaction through the provision of rules and values embedded in the technology.

iii. The institutional condition of interaction with technology influences people in their interaction with technology. Human agents draw upon institutional properties such as organisation’s intentions, professional norms, state-of-the-art in materials and knowledge, design standards and available resources to act.

iv. Technology can have institutional consequences whereby the human confirmation or rejection of technology might reinforce or change the structure of the organisation (Orlikowski, 1992a, p. 410).
The duality of technology reflects the mutual interaction between technology and organizations, whereby technology is socially constructed by and for people to act and is reconstructed by human actors through its use in social practices. In Orlikowski’s structural model, technology is scoped as material artefacts embracing both objective (material nature) and subjective (human construction) dimensions. The implication of structural properties on the interplay of people and technology is further emphasized by the concept of interpretive flexibility of technology that (Orlikowski, 1992a) uses to express the significance of the nature of material artefacts, human values and social contexts on the development and deployment of technology.

3.2.2 Proposed contribution of the duality of technology theory

For empirical research, and contrary to Giddens’ approach, Orlikowski has attempted to demonstrate different strategies to guide interested researchers in applying the duality of technology for empirical data analysis. In a study of information systems development and organizational consequences of using information technology, Orlikowski and Robey (1991) offered a useful interpretive framework of social factors emerging from the interaction of information technology and organization in the mode of structuration. They proposed implications for understanding: (i) the development and deployment of technology with its embedded values in the institutionalized context, (ii) the consequences of the implementation of the technology, and (iii) the conditions in which human action can be transformed or by itself transform the institutionalized technology. In another study of the use of collaborative technology, Orlikowski (1992b) effectively illustrated the application of the structurationist perspectives in examining the influence of collaboration technology in the organisations. Although the role of technology was underlined in transforming the nature of work as well as forming new patterns of human interaction, the influences of individuals’ mental models, organisational structures and cultures on the use of technology were portrayed. As one example, Orlikowski reaffirmed that technology “on its own was unlikely to engender collaboration” (1992b, p. 362).

Information system researchers have been widely informed by the theoretical perspectives of the duality of technology theory. For instance, Avgerou (2001) found Orlikowski’s insights into how technology is shaping social relations while being shaped by human interaction useful for her research in IT implementation and organisational reform in Cyprus. The theory is significant in studying the national and international contexts that necessitate the cultural social and cognitive elements in information systems and organisational change research. In library and information systems research, Orlikowski’s theory of the duality of technology has been used in particular to study information behaviour, knowledge management and the implementation of information in different library sectors, yielding valuable findings in the process (Rosenbaum, 2010).

However, in her later work, Orlikowski (2000) extended her structural perspective of technology from the “embodied” structure of technology as proposed in her 1992 theory, to a “practice” lens, where technology is treated as an emergent structure, and human interaction with technology “enacts” structures. She explained this new perspective as better reflecting the constant change of technology in use and in organizational practice, whilst resolving her
theoretical conflict with structuration theory: “seeing structures as embodied in artifacts thus ascribes a material existence to structures” (Orlikowski, 2000, p. 406). The change of her structural view reflected the shift from the dualism view of society and technology as distinctive entities to a social shaping view of technology in the late 1990s in which technology and society were regarded as intertwined (Wajcman & MacKenzie, 1999). Nevertheless, some authors (e.g., Jones & Karsten, 2008; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2005; Rose & Scheepers, 2001) have raised questions over the consistency of Orlikowski’s later theoretical perspective, claiming that the equation of technology and structure contradicts the philosophical stance of structuration theory in which structures are embedded in human action and do not otherwise physically exist (cf. Giddens, 1979, 1984).

More recently, Orlikowski (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Orlikowski, 2010) has promoted her practice theory in which she suggested three strategies to studying technology in organisational practice, namely, an empirical approach, a theoretical approach, and a philosophical approach. The empirical strategy is centred in everyday routinized and improvised activities with a focus on both structural and agency perspectives. The second strategy articulates the theoretical relationships of human actions with time and space, and the intended and unintended consequences of their actions. The final philosophical strategy aims to view the social world as existing in everyday activity, rather than being viewed either as external to human actions or as socially constructed. The first two strategies seem to be grounded in structuration theory and social constructivism conceptions, whilst the philosophical perspective attempts to highlight the social ontology of reality in practice theories. Orlikowski believed that “it is not just that recurrent actions constitute structures, but that the enacted structures also constitute the ongoing actions” (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p. 1242). However, Orlikowski also agreed with some critics that her practice theory is still uncertain and less empirically accepted.

In considering the usefulness of the duality of technology in examining the influences of structure, culture and technology on human interaction in organisations, as well as the importance of maintaining a more consistent theoretical perspective of the duality of technology theory with the theory of structuration, this research utilises the original version of the duality of technology (Orlikowski, 1992a). Specifically, the duality of technology framework is used: (i) to elucidate understanding of the interrelationships between technology, people and organisational structure; (ii) in analysing the influences of technology development on the collaboration activities undertaken by academics and library staff; and (iii) in examining how university structures and associated cultural factors impact on the use of technology for collaboration, and how human interaction with technology impacts collaboration.

By adopting the duality of technology theory as a complementary theoretical framework to Giddens’ theory of structuration, this research seeks to make theoretical contributions to both theories by addressing their usefulness and shortcomings in empirical research.

3.3 Conclusion

Structuration theory has been proposed as a useful theoretical framework for studying the interrelationship between qualities of human relationships and social structures. The relevance
of structuration theory in viewing social structure as both the medium and the outcome of human action facilitates deeper understanding of the collaborative relationship in organisational practice from the broader structure and individual action perspectives. The theory is used as a framework for studying the influence of culture on collaboration and the differences of culture across Australia and Vietnam.

The duality of technology extended structuration theory to a greater focus on the roles and influences of technology, which is important for exploring the dynamic interactions between technology, institutional structures and people in different organisational contexts.

The theories are complementary and have been used as theoretical lenses for the study of collaboration contexts, and the influences of power, culture and social identities, and technology on academics and library staff in their collaboration, and how their interactions produce changes that impact these social structures.

Findings from Chapter 2 - Literature review and Chapter 3 - Theoretical frameworks serve as background knowledge guiding the research design and the development of data collection instruments and data analysis, which are presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 4 - Research design

4 Research design

This chapter outlines the research design. It initially discusses the proposed paradigm of the research, and the relevance of the case study method in studying the complex nature of collaborative relationships in the university context. It follows with the description of the data collection process at one university in Australia and one university in Vietnam, as well as strategies and techniques used for analysing data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of triangulation methods to increase the credibility of the findings, and potential ethical issues related to this research.

4.1 Research paradigm

Cecez-Kecmanovic and Kennan (2013) have criticised the overemphasis on research methodologies, research methods and techniques in recent research that has led to the ignorance of the methodological implications of underlying research paradigms. Research paradigms shape the choice of methodology and methods to ensure the logic of the research process is maintained for the best outcome (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998). It is therefore important to understand the distinctive nature and philosophical stances of each paradigm to ensure the most appropriate research design.

Research paradigm has been given different names, including philosophical assumptions, philosophical worldviews, meta-theoretical assumptions, or epistemology and ontology, although all such definitions refer to the theoretical philosophy and the major research position that researchers adopt to investigate the research problem. Specifically, Kuhn (1970) referred to a research paradigm as “a set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the systematic study of that world”. Creswell (2014, p. 6) defined research paradigm as a worldview, “a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study”.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recalled the development of three eras of research paradigms, prepositivism, positivism and postpositivism, each of which represents a unique set of beliefs that have guided research inquiry in either physical or social science over the time. The prepositivist is the oldest and emphasises passive observation and less empirical testing. This paradigm is no longer popular today. The positivist paradigm presents contrasting beliefs with the postpositivist paradigm (naturalistic paradigm). Positivist researchers consider “the reality is single, tangible and fragmentable” while naturalistic researchers believe: “realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 25). Each paradigm is based on a particular set of assumptions about “the nature and existence of reality, that is, ontology; the nature of knowledge and the way of knowing, that is, epistemology; the logic of scientific explanation; and ethics, claims about values and normative reasoning concerned with what ought to be” (Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2011, p. 4).
In information and knowledge management, Cecez-Kecmanovic (2011), Cecez-Kecmanovic and Kennan (2013) and Williamson (2013) have identified the dominant research paradigms as positivism, interpretivism (naturalistic paradigm) and critical theory. This research emphasises the interpretivist paradigm since this approach views social reality as subjectively existing and mutually constructed by human actions. The paradigm of interpretivism consists of three main strands: language theory; phenomenology and ethnology; and hermeneutics and constructivism (Cecez–Kecmanovic, 2011). Constructivist researchers aim to interpret the meaning of the world through their experiences and engagement with the social phenomena in context. This approach also “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67).

In light of this, the research paradigm underpinning this study was interpretivism, using the constructivism strand. This paradigm fits closely with the aim of this research, which is to explore the nature of the relationship between academics and library staff and their perspectives of the contextual factors that influence their collaborative relationships in different university contexts. The researcher positions herself as a constructivist researcher. Her philosophical assumptions about the world is that it is socially constructed by human interaction and its meaning should be understood in context.

The nature of the constructivist approach involves qualitative methodology as it enables researchers to address the research problem through their own interpretation of the meaning of social phenomena from the participants’ perspectives in specific contexts (Creswell, 2007, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, 2011). Qualitative research emphasises the study of qualitative data through interviews, observations, case study, texts, visual demonstration and personal reflection to interpret how social reality is constructed and how meaning is shaped (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). In this research, in which the researcher interacted with participants in their work context to explore the meaning of collaboration and associated factors that enable or constrain the collaborative process, qualitative methodology was the most relevant choice. The next section presents the method of enquiry for this research.

4.2 Case study strategy

In this research, case study strategy was utilised for four reasons: (i) its relevance in studying contemporary events in natural settings; (ii) its capability in achieving an in-depth understanding of the complex behavioural events; (iii) its usefulness in theory development; and, (iv) its support for integrating the researcher’s experience and insights of the phenomena in the process of co-constructing knowledge with participants. The following sections explain these points of view in detail.

4.2.1 Case study as a research method

Along with the implications of the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology, the research question is an important source of information informing the choice of the research method (Creswell, 2007; Thomas, 2011; Williamson & Johanson, 2013; Yin, 2003). To recap, this research focused on exploring the main features and influencing factors of collaboration
between academics and librarians, and explaining how these factors constrain and enable their collaborative relationship in different university situations and contexts. The research aimed to answer the question: “How do academics and library staff collaborate, and how can the features, influences and outcomes of such collaborative relationships be theorised?”

Yin (2003) suggested case study as a significant method to answer the questions of “how” and “why”. These types of questions are particularly relevant to research requiring an in-depth investigation of the social phenomenon in context (Yin, 2003, 2009). Case study offers the researcher insights into the particularity and complexity of the studied phenomenon from multiple perspectives (Simons, 2009; Thomas, 2011), so “we can get closer to the why and the how” (Thomas, 2011 p. 4).

Darke, Shanks, and Broadbent (1998) found case study to be the most widely used research method in information systems research, particularly in studies exploring associated issues concerning the use of information technology in organisational contexts. They suggested the strategy of combining systematic case study design with relevant and pragmatic data collection and analysis to make the research findings rigorous. Although case study has sometimes been misperceived as “the weak sibling among social science methods”, the strategy becomes most relevant when the phenomena are too complex to explain the assumed causal relationships in real life contexts (Yin, 2003, p. xiii). The related research of Hrycaj and Russo (2007) and Arendt and Lotts (2012) into library collaboration provides examples of the problems when using survey methods. Both authors confirmed the lack of reliable and detailed data from the surveys to explain the complex issues of collaboration.

Thus, case study method serves the purpose of this study, which aims for in-depth investigation of the complex nature of collaboration between academics and librarians. This research places a particular emphasis on the significance of context in studying the influence of structural factors on the relationship between academics and library staff in the two universities chosen (more detail is given in section 4.2.3). The researcher considered the use of other methods, such as interviews with academics and library staff across a large number of universities, but such a method would lose insights into the organisational context in which their relationship occurs and is mediated.

Case study strategy is preferred when what is being researched are contemporary phenomena, and behavioural events that cannot be manipulated by the investigator (Benbasat, Goldstein, & Mead, 1987; Yin, 2003)). In this research of two universities in Australia and Vietnam, the researcher did not have any control over the behaviours of participants in their collaboration practice.

### 4.2.2 Case study and theory development

While case study method has been increasingly used and has yielded important findings in information systems research, it has traditionally been misunderstood as lacking the ability of generalisation (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg argued that formal generalisation has been overrated in scientific research whilst the value of examples (cases) for explanation and prediction are undervalued. Yin (2014) contended that case study does not aim to generalise to populations.
or the universe, but to theories. Eisenhardt (1989) found theories built from case study research are empirically valid, novel and verifiable due to the tight link with evidence of the reality. Her inductive approach of building theory from case study, which emphasises the corroboration of literature, empirical observation and the researchers’ experiences and insights, has been an important roadmap for case study researchers. Furthermore, Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 173) proposed that the use of multiple case studies to deepen understanding and explanation of the phenomena would strengthen a theory whilst enhancing the generalisability of case study research. This strategy supports the achievement of significant evidence in each case and important comparison of the similarities and differences of the findings. As the main objectives of this research are to gain in-depth understandings of academics’ and library staff’s relationship and to develop a theoretical framework of collaboration, a multiple case study method has been selected.

Yin (2014) highlighted the importance of developing theoretical perspectives guiding the direction of the research, data collection, and data analysis to achieve a strong case study research design. He believed that “the complete research design embodies ‘a theory’ of what is being studied” (p. 38). By the same token, Benbasat et al. (1987, p. 370) advocates the case research strategy since it is “well-suited to capturing the knowledge of practitioners and developing theories from it”.

In this research, structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and the duality of technology (Orlikowski, 1992a) have been utilised as two complementary theoretical frameworks. A thorough review of these theories and their potential contribution in guiding this research was given in Chapter 3. Both theories informed the conduct of this empirical study, from the stage of collecting and analysing data to the final step of developing a theoretical framework of collaboration between academics and library staff.

The theoretical lens of structuration theory used in this research focuses on the interplay of the structure and individuals’ actions. Human interactions influence and are influenced by structure in social practice across time and space. Human actors are knowledgeable, thus their actions reflect their knowledge of the world, power and social rules of conduct. Structuration theory provided a theoretical lens guiding the research towards greater focus on the influence of power, culture and social identities upon academics and library staff in their collaboration. In addition to structuration theory, duality of technology theory (Orlikowski, 1992a) provides a complementary theoretical lens for understanding the influence of technology in social practice. Orlikowski’s theory focuses on the interaction of structure and technology and people in organisational contexts.

### 4.2.3 Unit of analysis

The most fundamental component of case study design is to define the unit(s) of analysis and case(s) to be studied (Yin, 2003, 2009, 2014). Yin suggested a desired case should be “real life” phenomena and concrete entities such as individuals, organisations or partnerships. Compared to a single case design, the multiple case approach is preferable for the achievement of significant evidence in each case and important comparison of the similarities and differences of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This research studied collaboration between
academics and library staff in university settings. The unit of analysis therefore is instances of collaboration between academics and library staff.

As discussed in chapter 1, the study was conducted at an Australian university and a Vietnamese university. Since each university involves several faculties and library branches, the research studied the collaborative relationships between academics and library staff across its embedded units, i.e., faculties and libraries. At the Australian university, six out of ten faculties and all the campus libraries, which had collaborative relationships with those faculties, were selected. Each faculty formed an embedded case, or in other words a sub-case, in the Australian university case. At the Vietnamese university, the study involved five out of ten faculties and two partnering library branches. Each of those faculties formed an embedded case in the Vietnamese university. (Details for the selection of the embedded cases in each university are discussed in sections 4.3.1 and 4.4.1)

Justification for the selection of the university cases and their embedded cases is based on the promising access of researcher to the case(s) for in-depth investigations (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014); the possibilities of gaining different perspectives on the research problems, so-called “purposeful maximal sampling” (Creswell, 2005, 2007); and the proposed theoretical perspectives of the research (Yin, 2014).

The Australian university case is one of the leading universities in Australia with a very large number of enrolments in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The university was an earlier adopter of the Research Skills Development Framework developed by John Willison and Kerry O’Regan (2008), an educational model in which academics and library staff work together to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and research. Like many other universities in Australia, it has a typical structure of faculties and library branches located across multiple campuses. In recent years, there have been significant changes to the library staffing structure in order to enhance the relationship with academics across faculties of the university. The university relocated academics who worked in an academic skills and English language teaching unit to the library. These academics were called academic skills advisers and worked with liaison librarians to collaborate with faculties in a team structure, known as a faculty-library collaboration team. Academic skills advisers were therefore interviewed and analysed as members of the library regarding their collaborative relationship with academics. However, since this participant group previously worked as academic staff, particular characteristics of their profession and culture that influenced their relationship with librarians were analysed to gain deeper insights.

In-depth investigation of the relationship between academics and library staff in such a complex university structure, i.e. with different faculties and library branches in different locations, would provide important understandings about the impacts of structure on the relationship. The researcher has received support from the university and obtained permission for data collection on site. After finishing the data collection process, the researcher has worked in the university as library staff and as an academic member of two faculties. These roles have helped the researcher gain further insights into the case, which has proved useful for the data analysis process.
The Vietnamese university is likewise one of the top universities in Vietnam, providing multidisciplinary higher education programs to a large number of enrolments. The university has a complex structure of courses delivered in multiple foreign languages since it has long-developed teaching and research partnerships with many universities in Australia and other countries. Many academics and university leaders have graduated from Australia and other developed countries. Thus their style of teaching and course design have been influenced by more developed countries’ education systems. Academics and library staff of the university have been working in different collaborative teaching and research initiatives. As with the Australian university, there have been significant changes in the library structure in recent years, with an aim of improving library performance and collaboration with all faculties of the university. The university library has built strong partnerships with some faculties through teaching information literacy to students, but is still facing various challenges in collaborating with the others.

The researcher used to be a librarian who worked collaboratively with academics of different faculties at the Vietnamese university. Her experience and insights into the relationships between librarians and academics have enabled her to better interact with participants and co-construct the meaning of their relationships to generate knowledge that reflects their reality (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

This research used the multiple case studies design to achieve the aims of gaining in-depth understandings of the characteristics and influencing factors of academics’ and library staff’s relationship in different university contexts, as well as constructing theoretical propositions from the research findings across the cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The study utilised multiple sources of data, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observation and organisational documents. The richness of data collected enabled this research to explore the most important factors that influence the mutual interactions of academics and library staff in the university context.

4.3 Data collection at the Australian university

4.3.1 Selection of participants

At a very early stage of the research, it was recommended that the researcher meet some library staff who worked with academics in two faculties located across two different campuses, and some senior academics who had a good understanding of the collaboration practice with library staff. The researcher learned about a significant change of library staffing structure which was designed to assist collaboration with academics. The restructure happened in the late 2000's when the library took on the responsibility for managing academic skills advisers, who previously worked in the University unit offering language and learning support for students. These academic skills advisers were relocated to the library and jointly worked with liaison librarians in a faculty-library team structure. The merger seemed to have impacted on the working relationship between academics and library staff, which promised to generate interesting findings for the research. Through a number of discussions, the researcher
developed a sound understanding of the current state of the faculty and library partnership and possible impacts of structure of the university itself on academics and library staff.

Through the research design process, six faculties were identified and selected as embedded cases. These cases represented a varied degree of collaboration and differences in faculty size and campus location. There were two large faculties based across more than one campus. There was one medium sized faculty and three small sized ones located in either small or large campuses. One case was recognized as the most successful faculty in collaboration. A special aspect of this case was the embedded building design where the library and the faculty shared the same physical space. It was assumed that this case would generate interesting findings about the influence of space design upon collaboration.

In selecting participants for research into library collaboration, Bundy (2004) recommended in his Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework: Principles, Standards and Practice that three groups of educators be involved: library staff, academics and administrators. Bundy’s recommendation was relevant in the collaboration practices of this Australian university. Library liaison staff, academics and administrators were therefore selected as three groups of participants for this case study.

Group 1: Library liaison staff groups were librarians and academic skills advisors who worked in faculty-library collaboration teams. At the initial stage of data collection, the researcher had an important meeting with a senior library staff member who worked with the liaison teams and academics. The meeting provided an overview of the collaboration practice, staffing structure for collaboration with faculties, and achievements and challenges in building partnerships with academics. The researcher was then recommended by email to all the team leaders of the faculty-library teams, library branch managers and academic skills advisers, and then to members of the library teams. Some library staff were very interested and actively sought out the researcher with offers to participate.

Group 2: Academics selected were lecturers and/or researchers and tutors who were full-time or casual staff with varying levels of involvement in working collaboratively with library staff. The selection process sought to yield better understanding of how and why academics collaborate or do not collaborate with library staff, due to the researcher’s assumption that the level of collaboration with library staff varied considerably among academics. Contact with academics was mainly from recommendations by academics and library staff participants. In most cases, the researcher had responses from academics via email or telephone.

Group 3: Administrators were management and administrative staff who either had leadership, academic or supportive roles in library and academic collaborative initiatives. In the library, administrators referred to senior management library staff, library managers, coordinators or library team leaders. Their contacts were identified from the library website and by suggestions of participants. In faculties, administrators included senior faculty leaders, heads of school or department, course directors, course coordinators and course administrators.
In each embedded case, it was expected to have at least one participant from all three groups of participants i.e. academics, library staff, and administrators. The researcher made her best effort to contact all the identified staff of the six selected faculties. However, in one faculty there was no response from a liaison librarian after several contact attempts, while in another faculty an academic skill advisor of the library liaison team was going on a long holiday and was thus unavailable.

Of a total of 31 participants, 27 took part in 29 interviews and four were involved in a focus group. All participants’ details were de-identified using their main role title with a number. Some participants’ titles were renamed to maintain their anonymity. There were 11 participants who had single roles as academics. Of the 11 library staff, eight had single roles, i.e., four librarians and four academic skills advisers, while the other three, one librarian and two academic skills advisers, also worked as sessional academic staff. The administrator group of nine participants included four senior academic management staff who were academics, five senior library management staff who had a background as librarians or academic skill advisers, and one single-role course administrator. The differences in participants’ roles, as well as the nature of multiple roles, have made their ideas and thoughts about organizational structure, contextual issues and influencing factors of collaboration particularly valuable to this research.

4.3.2 Sources of evidence

This case study involved four main sources of data collected from semi-structured interviews, a focus group, observation and the organisation’s internal documents. There were 29 in-depth interviews (including two follow-up interviews with a senior librarian and an academic towards the end of the data collection process), one focus group, two observation sessions and a rich set of organisational documents. Interview times varied from 30 minutes to 90 minutes depending on the extent of participants’ responses and their availability. The focus group was undertaken in an hour. Venues for the interviews and focus group were places agreed upon by participants, such as academics’ offices, library meeting rooms or outdoor venues such as cafés or campus tables. All the interviews and a focus group were recorded using at least two recording tools to avoid appliance failure. Data collection was undertaken over a six-month period (see interview schedule for Australian participants in Appendix 1).

*Semi-structured interviews:* This first source of data collection involved asking participants a list of open-ended questions (see Appendix 2) to obtain their opinions about their involvement in collaboration and factors influencing their relationship. To help elicit relevant answers, all participants were given the list of questions to read before the interview. Participants were asked about their involvement, experiences and perspectives about their collaboration practices, the influence of contextual factors, current challenges, their solutions and their expectations of change.

Data collected from the interviews formed a primary source of evidence in this research. It allowed the researcher to acquire “deep knowledge, lived experiences and occupational ideology” of reality from multiple perspectives (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 98). Over time,
through the interviews, the researcher developed insights and a sense of cultural variation when she interacted with participants of different groups across the faculties and campuses.

**Focus group:** While interviews are better known for eliciting individual views, focus groups are important for understanding attitudes and experiences of different people working within the same social and cultural context (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). In this case study, a focus group was conducted with a faculty-library collaboration team that was known as an exemplar of collaboration with academics. Participants involved were one library management staff member, two liaison librarians and an academic skills adviser. The focus group was an open discussion about participants’ experiences in forming successful teaching and research collaborative relationships with academics, and their insights into some specific issues of collaboration (see topics of the focus group in Appendix 3). The shared discussion in the focus group supported the researcher in examining different viewpoints from a group of participants over the same issues as in the interviews and the influence of peer relationship and norms on their insights (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Krueger, 1994).

**Observation sessions:** Observations of two collaborative projects between the library and academics were undertaken. The first observation happened at a training session of academic and library skills for postgraduate students by a faculty library team. The training was a product of a collaboration initiative between the library and one faculty. The second observation occurred in a formal meeting of a new collaborative teaching initiative between three academics and one library staff member who was an academic skills adviser. In the meeting, academics and library staff discussed activities needed to improve academic skills such as group work skills, presentation skills and writing skills for students enrolled in a subject. Techniques used for this observation included recording the discussion, making field notes of interactions between participants, elaborating and reflecting upon situations that are significant for data analysis (Delamont, 2004) (see observation checklist in Appendix 4). Information collected from the two observations was important in achieving “incontestable description” to support in-depth analysis of the complexity of the case (Stake, 1995, p. 62).

**Organisational documents:** Documents from faculties’ websites, library websites, library annual reports and minutes of meetings between library staff and faculty representatives, were used throughout the study (see the list of documents in Appendix 5). To attain valuable information from these sources, Bowen's (2009) techniques for collection and document analysis were utilised. These procedures encompassed finding, selecting, interpreting, synthesising, and organising data into categories to develop new themes or support the existing themes of the research. These sources of data gave important information about the university strategies in education and research, structure of faculties and the library as well as the on-going development of the library over the years.

All the interviews and focus group data were transcribed by the researcher and by a transcription service during and after the data collection period.

Overall, the data collected for the Australian university case study was very rich in nature. All the key issues addressed in the research questions were explored in depth, gaining multiple
perspectives and valuable insights. This phase of data collection ended when no new data were observed, i.e., the point of data saturation was reached (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

### 4.4 Data collection at the Vietnamese university

The researcher worked as a librarian in the Vietnamese university for several years coordinating liaison library staff and academics in different collaborative activities such as teaching information literacy, and organising training workshops. She also worked in collection development activities. Her long relationship with library staff and academics created favourable conditions for the data collection process. Furthermore, as a former staff member, the researcher’s experience enabled her to share understandings with all participants about the university structure, management system, work culture and practices or common rules. Although there can be several disadvantages of being an insider, such as role duality, overlooking certain behaviours or assuming participants’ views without making necessary clarification (Unluer, 2012), the researcher made attempts to overcome such issues. She shared her understanding of the university’s operation, management and work culture with her supervisors before undertaking data collection. During the fieldwork, she reported and discussed the content of the interviews with them and benefited from their outsiders’ advice and questions regarding information that needed further clarification from participants.

#### 4.4.1 Selection of participants

The library staffing structure was different to the Australian case. There was no particular group of academic skills advisers who worked in the role of helping students with academic skills in the library. The library staffing structure of this university is typical of almost all academic libraries in Vietnam as well as many other academic libraries in the world (and indeed in Australia, where academic skills advisers often worked in a separate unit to the library or in the faculties). In this university, the role of teaching academic skills was usually undertaken by the academics in faculties. In some faculties, these skills were sometimes provided during the lectures or workshops by academics teaching in particular courses. In the other faculties where the disciplines were taught in English or another foreign language, students had a chance to learn academic skills in their first year when they studied English or other languages in foreign language faculties.

There were five faculties selected as embedded case studies for this university. They represented different disciplines, sizes of faculty, and different degrees of collaboration between academic staff and librarians across the faculties and library branches. The first embedded case involved the largest faculty of the university, with a large number of enrolments and courses provided. The second was undertaken at the oldest faculty with fewer enrolments. The third was one of the youngest faculties in the university, in which the library collaborated to teach information literacy to all the first year students of the university. The fourth selection was a faculty that had showed exemplary changes in its relationship with the library in recent years. The last selected case involved a faculty in which the library and the faculty were collocated in one building. This selection aimed for a comparison of collaboration with the Australian faculty case that had a similar collocation.
As in the Australian case study, there were three participants groups: library staff, academics and administrative staff.

Group 1: The library staff participants included librarians who were working collaboratively with academics. These librarians had long experience working in the liaison role. They were chosen based on their role including a wide range of collaborative activities with academics, such as library user training programs, teaching information literacy, staff development, library acquisitions and collection management. All participants were invited via emails. All of them were very enthusiastic about the research. They found the topic very relevant because it connected with their daily work and aimed to address the long-term challenges of collaboration.

Group 2: Academic participants were lecturers and researchers who worked collaboratively with library staff to different degrees. Some of them had extensive experience working with library staff through the years and in various activities, while others rarely worked with library staff. Most invited academics knew the researcher through their previous work relationship or through connections with the library networks. Her work relationship with academics facilitated the process of contacting academics and collecting data. Academic participants shared valuable thoughts and frank opinions regarding all issues discussed.

Group 3: The administrative group involved participants who had management and administrative roles in facilitating or organising collaborative activities between librarians and academic staff. In this university case study, they were senior staff management staff from faculties and the library. They were selected because their roles were particularly important in making collaboration happen.

There was a total of 25 participants: 12 took part in 12 interviews and 14 joined the workshop (one participant joined both interview and workshop). All participants’ names and titles were de-identified using their main role titles and a number. As in the Australian case study, participants in this university often performed more than one role. There were 11 academic participants who had a single role as academics, while the other four academics (categorised in the Administrator group) acted as management staff. Of the six library staff, three had an extra teaching role in a faculty. The Administrator group included seven participants who were Associate Deans, Heads of Department, Faculty managers, and Library senior management.

Again, from the library staff perspective, the nature of having shared roles across the library boundary with academics of the faculties gave them important insights into their academic partners’ roles, as well as understanding of the contextual impacts that influenced their partners’ perception toward collaboration. With academics who mainly played management roles, the importance of collaboration with library staff seemed to be viewed and linked with broader course structures and outcomes.
4.4.2 Sources of evidence

There were five sources of data collected: nine detailed written responses to lists of questions, 12 semi-structured interviews, numerous informal conversations, a workshop and the organisation’s documents. Data collection was undertaken over a 10-month period (see interview schedule for Vietnamese participants in Appendix 6).

Written responses: Interview questions were sent by email to 12 participants who agreed to participate. To help elicit relevant answers, participants were given the list of questions before the interview and asked if they could give some written responses. As a result, nine participants gave detailed responses to all the questions. Details of the interview questions are in Appendix 7. The length of written responses ranged from 500 to 3500 words. The quality of the response was exceptional, containing a variety of well thought-out and wide-ranging views over the issues of collaboration.

Semi-structured interviews: Participants were asked about their involvement, experiences and perspectives on their collaboration practices, the influence of contextual factors, current challenges, their solutions and their expectations of change. Participants who had provided written answers were asked follow-up questions designed to get clarification and extension of their written responses. With participants who did not give written responses, discussion was extended to achieve further insights. The interviews usually lasted more than 90 minutes. Venues for the interview were places agreed by participants, such as academics’ offices and library meeting rooms or via online tools such as Skype or Facetime. All the interviews were recorded. Participants were asked about the degree of their collaborative relationship with library or academic partners, experiences and perspectives about structural and contextual factors as well as challenges involved in specific joint events, their solutions and expectations of change. Participants contributed important insights, resourceful ideas and opinions about critical issues related to their collaboration practices. The overall quality of data collected through the interviews was highly relevant to the research question.

Informal conversations and talks: These conversations with academics and library staff happened during the data collection process. As a work colleague, the researcher has had long relationships with participants and other staff of the university. Venues for informal conversation were at the library, on campus, café, or online using Skype and Facetime. These conversations provided good ideas about the perceptions of the participants and colleagues toward their relationships and structural issues and various challenges that influenced their day-to-day interactions. The main ideas arising from such casual conversations were noted in the researcher’s diary.

Workshop: A workshop on the topic of collaboration between academics and library staff was conducted with 10 academics, three library staff and a senior management staff member at the library of the international education faculty of the university (see workshop programs in Appendix 8). The workshop started with a 20 minute presentation by the researcher about the findings of the Australian case study, including achievements and challenges in collaboration, and the use of the Research Skills Development framework (Willison & O’Regan, 2008), and concluding with suggested insights for collaboration between the library and academics of this
faculty. After the presentation, there was a very interesting discussion between academics and library staff and the researcher about the current issues in their collaboration, useful initiatives and how challenges can be addressed. All participants, academics, library staff and management staff had the chance to be heard in the discussion. The workshop lasted for 90 minutes, and was recorded.

*Organisational documents:* The university’s documents were collected from the web system of the university and library websites and the library’s Facebook pages. The university’s documents provided useful information about important changes in the university education strategies, international collaboration programs with Australian universities, library collaboration programs and joint events for the library and faculties (see the list of organisational documents in Appendix 5).

All interviews and the workshop were conducted in Vietnamese. The data was transcribed and coded in Vietnamese, but all relevant themes were translated into English by the researcher during the writing process.

The sources of evidence varied across the Australian university (interviews, a focus group and two observation sessions) and the Vietnamese university (written responses, interview and a workshop) due to a number of reasons related to the willingness of participants in each case. With the Australian case, the researcher was fortunate to be offered a focus group with a library team although initially she contacted the library manager for an individual interview. The two observation sessions were also kindly offered by some participants after their interviews. Written responses for interview questions could not be collected at this university since participants appeared to be very busy.

Data collection at the Vietnamese case happened in the time that the library had finished their information literacy teaching series in faculties (they taught 2 weeks in a semester) so observations could not be arranged. The original plan to organise a focus group with library staff and academics of one faculty turned into a workshop as requested by the Dean of that faculty. Despite changes in the original data collection plans, data collection at both universities was very rich in nature, bringing in interesting findings and greater insights into the current issues of collaboration.

Although the number of interviews undertaken at the Vietnamese university was smaller than its Australian counterpart, this was justified based on a comparison of the different size of both universities, and the long experience of the researcher in the local university. The Vietnam university is smaller with nearly 800 full-time equivalent staff (FTE), in comparison to more than 8,000 FTE staff in the Australian university. The researcher worked as a librarian in the Vietnamese university for three years, and as a librarian and teaching staff member for its Australian and local affiliations in Vietnam for six years. She shared with participants a common understanding of contextual challenges in the university and in Vietnam as a whole, and gained various in-depth insights through a number of informal conversations with them. Therefore, data collected at both universities were balanced in terms of depth and richness.
4.5 Data analysis

4.5.1 Analytic strategies

Prior to the data analysis process, the researcher had the opportunity to attend a hands-on training session on the use of grounded theory for qualitative research by a grounded theorist, Kathy Charmaz (the developer of the third generation of grounded theory) (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The training helped the researcher to reaffirm her understanding about the key principles of using grounded theory techniques for analysis. Importantly, the researcher was directed by Charmaz to the middle-level analysis techniques of Dey (1993), because these better suited the research design of this study and the available time for analysing such a large volume of data collected.

There were two main advantages of Dey’s middle-level data analysis method for this research. From the top down, it allowed the researcher to analyse data based on her assumed theoretical perspectives of structuration theory and the duality of technology, the specific sets of research questions and main insights from the review of existing literature. From the bottom up, it supported the use of grounded theory techniques to encourage the discovery of new patterns emerging from the data.

Along with the main analysis techniques of Dey (1993), constructivist grounded theory techniques (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) and cross case comparison procedures (Miles and Huberman, 1994) guided the data analysis process in this research (see Table 4-1). Data analysis was undertaken sequentially with data collection. Data were coded at two levels: middle-level coding (Dey 1993) and focused/selective coding (Charmaz 2006). Initially, the middle-level coding attempted to “to grasp basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole rather than by analysing them line by line” (Dey, 1993, p.110). After data were assigned into broad categories, detailed/focused coding/ were undertaken to refine or to integrate codes. This method of coding was viewed as a holistic approach since it also flexibly enabled the generation of categories that has been identified as key issues in the literature review and theoretical lenses used in the data collection process. At the second stage of analysis, focused coding technique was utilized to evaluate and synthesize data to develop theoretical codes/tentative categories for further analytic refinement (Charmaz, 2006).

In addition to the methodological analysis techniques, Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory and the duality of technology theory of Orlikowski (1992a) provided sensitising frameworks for understanding interrelated interactions occurring among people, institutional structure and technology in collaboration practices (these have been described fully in Chapter 2). Giddens claimed that human actors base their interaction on their existing knowledge about the world, their capabilities and social rules of conduct. Their interaction carries intentions, meanings, power and consequences that leads to changes in the structures that govern their actions. In addition, key insights from the literature review of current collaboration practices provided foundation knowledge for a further exploration of emerging issues from the data collected.
Table 4-1: Applications of data analysis techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis techniques</th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding the analytic focus</td>
<td>• Reading and reflecting upon the research problems, personal experiences, general culture and literature to identify general themes, central issues for analysis, the most promising themes and potential relationships among themes.</td>
<td>Dey (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotating, Memoing</td>
<td>• Reading through and recoding ideas about data in memos for further analysis. Memos have been written on data, categories, patterns, themes, and relationships throughout the data analysis process.</td>
<td>Charmaz (2006, 2014),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dey (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating categories</td>
<td>• Categories and sub-categories were created conceptually and empirically. They were either based on the key theoretical concepts and research questions or grounded from data.</td>
<td>Charmaz (2006, 2014),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dey (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigning data, Coding</td>
<td>• Data were compared and coded into categories or sub-categories. • Data which did not belong to the existing categories lead to the creation of new categories. Coding process was open to emerging ideas and concepts. • Focused coding techniques were applied to compare data with codes and categories in order to refine codes and categories.</td>
<td>Charmaz (2006, 2014),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dey (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making connections</td>
<td>• Specifying and forming the relationships between codes and categories based on focused codes, association of categories in the data, and the researcher’s theoretical sensitivity of data. Codes and categories were theoretically refined.</td>
<td>Charmaz (2006, 2014),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dey (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrices and maps</td>
<td>• Matrix tables were used for cross-case analysis. They aimed to: • Identify successive case and cross-case patterns • Compare and contrast findings across participant groups, i.e., between academics and library staff, and between librarians and academic skills advisers • Maps were used to make sense of the data and the relationship between codes as well as categories. They helped present, organise and analyse the connections between categories. • Final themes were refined for reporting the findings.</td>
<td>Dey (1993), Miles and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Huberman (1994)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Since structuration theory seeks to resolve the division of determinist and voluntarist views of structure and agency, application of the theory for social analysis is useful in examining the social phenomena from both macro and micro levels (Lars, 2000; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault,
Two levels of analysis were involved: a broader ‘institutional’ analysis of the structural properties of the social system on collaboration practices between academics and library staff, and a more focused analysis of how collaborators draw on these structures, rules and resources in their social interaction.

Particular emphasis was placed on patterns of collaboration activities, the changes of variety of structural, social and cultural forms across the societal boundary, and on the way collaborators draw upon rules and structures to act could enable and constrain their collaborative practice. The analysis of the structure of social interaction should be recognized integrally with the specified time and geographical distance explaining the ways and reasons for the chronological and geographical transmissions of different patterns of social system (Stillman & Stoecker, 2004).

### 4.5.2 The use of software

NVivo 10 software was used for data analysis in both the Australian and Vietnamese case studies. This software was useful for working with and managing codes of the large volume of data collected for each university case, i.e. nearly 200,000 words in total. The coding and organising data functions worked most effectively in creating codes, shifting codes, further coding from nodes, and viewing codes in either narrow or broader contexts or splitting and aggregating categories. Likewise, the searching function supported the finding of key words across all transcripts and coding categories, which was helpful to enhance the quality of the manual coding process.

Other functions such as memoing, reporting and presenting data across the cases presented some limitations. For instance, the writing memo function supported linking a memo to a specific code, but there was no systematic view of all memos along with codes assigned, which was problematic. Additionally, the researcher sometimes suffered interrupted system errors which caused loss of work. Besides saving a regular backup copy of the NVivo data files on an external hard drive and a cloud drive such as Dropbox, the researcher had to copy all the codes and memos into a Microsoft Word document and organised all hierarchical nodes in levelled headings with corresponding memos underneath, in case the NVivo program completely collapsed and was unable to recover.

NVivo 10 software was a useful tool to help with coding, organising and analysing data. The advantages of having fast access to the original texts, memoing or further coding from nodes of NVivo 10 has overcome traditional issues of using software for qualitative data analysis such as distancing the researcher from data or mechanical coding claimed in literature (Bazeley, 2007). Furthermore, it should be noted that the software served mainly as a supporting tool for data analysis and management, and could not replace the researcher’s role in reading, thinking and making sense of data empirically and theoretically.
4.6 Triangulation methods and credibility of qualitative research

Triangulation of data is one of the most vital techniques to improve the credibility of findings and interpretation in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Denzin (1978, p. 340) suggested four triangulation approaches, i.e., data triangulation (the use of multiple data sources), methodological triangulation (use of different methods of data collection), investigators triangulation (use of more than one investigator), and theoretical triangulation (use of multiple theories) to validate findings. A combination of all triangulation modes can be hard to achieve in a single piece of research, so Denzin particularly recommends the use of data triangulation and methodological triangulation. This research utilised both of these approaches for validating the findings of both the Australian and the Vietnamese university cases.

The first mode of triangulation, multiple data sources, involves multiple sampling (interview respondents) in different contexts, locations and times, or multiple sources of data to verify the same information (e.g., a participant’s responses about a specific event and its corresponding organisation’s reports). In this doctoral research, data was triangulated with different groups of participants who worked in different positions, different locations (faculties, libraries, campuses, countries) at different points in time over the period of one and a half years. Another form was the use of multiple case studies to test the validity and credibility of findings and theoretical perspectives in different social and cultural contexts. Additionally, the researcher combined triangulation of the same data through interviews and meeting observation on the same form of interaction to validate the issues raised by participants.

The second mode of triangulation was undertaken via the use of different data collection methods in different case studies. The use of different multiple data collection methods in different case studies is driven by its appropriateness with the research problems, study contexts and particular points of interest identified in the selected case studies. With the Australian university case, the methodological triangulation involved four different data collection techniques, namely semi-structured interviews, a focus group, observation and document review. In contrast, methods of data collection at the Vietnamese case study were slightly different, i.e. collecting written responses prior to semi-structured interviews, conducting a workshop with different groups of participants, holding informal conversations, and document review. Triangulation of different data collection techniques across the case studies helped enhance the validity of the methods used in investigating the same issues.

In addition to triangulation methods used, four criteria to assess the worthiness of qualitative research by Miles and Huberman (1984) were considered as an important source of reference for enhancing the credibility of the research. These criteria as cited in Krefting (1991) included: “(a) the degree of familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study, (b) a strong interest in conceptual or theoretical knowledge and the ability to conceptualize large amounts of qualitative data, (c) the ability to take a multidisciplinary approach, that is, to look at the subject under investigation from a number of different theoretical perspectives, and (d) good investigative skills, which are developed through literature review, course work, and experience in qualitative research methods” (p.220).
In this research, the first criterion concerning the researcher’s understanding of the subject was met since the researcher is a qualified librarian and had experiences working in collaboration with academics of the two university case studies. For the second criterion, the researcher undertook extensive reading of literature and attended various academic seminars and conferences to improve her level of understanding in theories as well as building her conceptualising ability. For the third criterion, the subject of collaboration was researched across the four disciplines: management and organisational behaviour, knowledge management, education and research, and library and information science and findings emerged from different angles i.e. structural, social, cultural, technological and personal perspectives. The final criterion, the researcher’s investigative skills, were developed through doing the literature review for this project, writing journal articles and experiences in previously undertaking a minor thesis using qualitative methodology.

In summary, triangulation methods (Denzin, 1978) and key criteria to assess the credibility and trustworthiness of the research (Guba, 1981) were applied to achieve the rigor of the research.

4.7 Ethical issues

In conducting and reporting case study research, various authors have expressed their concerns about ethical conflicts related to the disclosure issue of information and potential harm to participants and involved organisations. Simons (1989) highlighted the need to balance “between the public right to know and the individual’s right to privacy” in order to ensure that information is interpreted and used appropriately to protect participants from exposure, whilst taking account of the accessibility of information to the public (p. 122). From a practical perspective, Walsham (2006) raised certain concerns about the ethical tensions in reporting problems within an organisation. More often, the organisation as “the bearer of bad news” would be disadvantaged in terms of its competitiveness, since its external image in the industry was affected. The senior management of the organisation would also be dissatisfied with any negative views reported by junior staff. Junior staff, even if names and titles were anonymised, could still possibly be identified by their managers. To resolve these conflicts, Simons (2009) suggested that researchers review potential harm to participants, in any context from the process of collecting data to reporting results. It is important that researchers follow specified procedures and give mindful consideration and professional judgement of the potential risks to participants, while maintaining the integrity of the case being reported.

In this research, the process of applying for ethics approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC Approval CF13/1174 – 2013000587) was an important step that informed the researcher of key ethical concerns and detailed procedures in conducting research into human affairs. Beyond the form and procedures, the researcher personally believes that the privacy and confidentiality of participant information needs to be properly respected, not only so as to meet the obligations of conducting the research ethically, but also as a mark of respect towards those participants who voluntarily contributed to the research.
In the data collection process, participants were first contacted by email concerning the project explanatory statements containing the project purpose, methods and outcomes, as well as steps to maintain the confidentiality of the participants’ information. All participants were advised that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any stage without disadvantage. Those who agreed to participate were required to sign a consent form before the interviews, focus groups, workshop and observation commenced.

In reporting the results, names and titles of participants, universities, faculties, and libraries were all anonymised. In a small number of instances, the university name might be recognised to people who work there due to some contextual information describing specific events or particular organisational structures. This issue, however, did not present any possibility of identifying participants.

At some specific case contexts where extreme opinions or highly sensitive information was sought, the researcher conceptualised the issue from a more theoretical perspective rather than providing direct quotes of participants’ responses. Furthermore, to minimise the ethical tensions of reporting problems of the organisation, the findings about the organisation were thoroughly considered for the achievement of a balanced report of both positive and negative aspects of organisational issues. By giving multiple perspectives on organisational issues, the research deliberated the usefulness of the insights generated from the issues discussed in order to limit unwanted perception of how well or how bad the organisation had done.

### 4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an outline of the research design. The research was conducted as a qualitative study, under the interpretivist paradigm using the case study research method.

The use of case study method has proved useful in obtaining contextual information about the relationships between academics and library staff in the two selected universities. It enabled the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of the factors related to the organisational settings, cultural and work norms that influence the perceptions and actions of participants toward collaboration across faculties, libraries, universities and countries. Interviews with academics and library staff who worked together in various collaboration activities in each university provided further insights into issues of collaborative relationships from different perspectives. The use of case study strategy also supported the researcher to co-construct knowledge with participants from her personal understanding and work experience at both universities. To enhance the credibility of case study research, the researcher utilised triangulation methods in which data were collected from multiple data sources using different collection methods.

In terms of strategies for data analysis, middle-level analysis techniques of Dey (1993), constructivist grounded theory techniques (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) and cross case comparison procedures by Miles and Huberman (1994) were found useful in developing themes, recognising patterns, analysing and organising the findings of the research.
In the following chapters, findings of each university case study are presented separately, and then a cross-case comparison is undertaken for further discussion and theorisation.
5  Australian case findings

This chapter outlines the findings from the data analysis of the Australian university case study (Figure 5-1).

Figure 5-1: Structure of the Australian case findings
Figure 5-1 is a coding tree map of the main findings about factors that influenced the collaboration practices of academics and library staff. There were seven categories representing seven main influencing factors, i.e., Governance, Culture, Power, Contexts, Technology, Personal Dimensions, and Time and Space. The two-way direction arrows reflected the interplay between the main influencing factors and collaboration practices.

Within each main category, there were sub-categories assigned for sub-factors at different levels of coding. In some instances, factors were interrelated and interconnected with others. There was no clear-cut classification of some sub-factors since they were found to be included in more than one category. The findings are presented in sections that correspond to each of the main influencing factors, supported by direct quotations of interviewees' responses. Participants have been labelled with their role title and a running number with A before it (for Australia); Vietnamese participants have V before the number. At the end of each section, relevant insights are elaborated and presented in a shaded box.

The chapter begins with an overall picture of the Australian university case study and the current stage of collaboration between academics and library staff. Then, it gives explanations of the social and governance structure of collaboration from the faculty and library perspectives to examine the structural impacts on the collaborative relationships and the main collaboration contexts. Key findings show that collaboration between academics and library staff in this university has significantly improved, highlighting the important change in structure and the supplementary contribution of information and technology development. The collaboration process has also been influenced by various structural and technological factors: (i) issues of power asymmetries within the library liaison teams comprised of librarians and academic skills advisers, and between academics and the library liaison staff regarding their roles, the level of autonomy, authority, and professional identity; (ii) the socio-cultural dynamics of the academic group and the professional group on collaborative relationships, and the multidimensional features of collaboration; (iii) the role of technology, which includes enabling and constraining factors of technology along with the influences of institutional structure on the use of technology in collaboration; (iv) the spatial and temporal dimensions of collaborative partnerships; and (v) individual dimensions.

5.1 Overview of the broader social system

The Australian case study is of a large and complex university with multiple campuses at home and overseas. The university has approximately 60,000 enrolments per year and is strongly research-focused. Collaboration between academics and library staff has become an educational strategy in which the library works with faculties to integrate information and research skills into the university curriculum. This study was conducted in six out of ten faculties and seven libraries located across all the Australian campuses.

In terms of the broader university structure, there are senior management committees that enable high-level engagement between university vice presidents, faculties' senior staff and library management. These committees are responsible for overall decision-making and oversight of academic affairs to promote and maintain high achievement in education and
research. The university librarian has recently become a member of one such senior academic committee. The formal representation of the university librarian in the senior team of the university was found to be very important to the library because it meant it was gaining a certain amount of power within the central management of the university:

That is excellent because it means that the university librarian is engaged with the senior decision making and that is where the faculty deans are as well ... And, you know, we are having an understanding of the direction and being able to contribute. Great opportunity, and really, really important .... (Senior library staff–22)

At a lower level in the committee system, there were teaching, learning and research bodies where library representatives and senior academic staff can meet to discuss and contribute to the university’s key initiatives and development strategies. The university has also established many other committees at various levels of management, with an aim to enhance communication and decision-making across all areas. The complicated structure of the university has nonetheless reduced the committees’ effectiveness and primary implications in practice:

There’s actually been 72 committees meeting every week in the university…There’s actually a drive to ask what are the real committees that actually do the work...I can’t see that the way they’re structured and the way that the ones that I’m involved in are very much—they’re not avenues for developing ideas .... (Academic–A6)

Furthermore, the committee structures have changed, been restructured or have disappeared over time, which created new challenges for both library staff and academics. With the library, there used to be a library committee with representative members from all the faculties meeting to provide advice about the library’s strategic directions and to act as an advisory committee to the academic committee. However, after many years, the committee was disbanded due to its lack of effectiveness and influence on the actual outcomes of library strategic directions:

It seems that there’s a lot happens outside the committee, and then the committee’s just the rubber stamp, and so therefore it’s like “why are we bothering spending the time”?... It was just turning into a session where things weren’t being discussed, decisions weren’t being made. (Academic–A6)

Another recent disbandment happened to a faculty committee that is a sub-committees of the faculty board in which library representatives were involved in the academic affairs of the faculty. Consequently, library staff had to make various efforts to communicate with faculties and academics about their activities and how they could add value to academia:

So I write a number of reports that go to different places, different people so that they can see what the library is doing .... (Senior library staff–A28)
With academics, who had mainly teaching and research focused roles, the change of structure and the lack of adequate communication of the change impeded opportunities for collaboration:

*Probably the first major barrier to me making more use of library services or collaborating with library staff would be that actually I don’t really know what they do. Beyond exam help and the services I have seen, I wouldn’t be able to say what they do.* (Academic–A14)

Meanwhile, academics who had more of an administrative role needed to make a great effort in keeping up-to-date with the changes to the structure and initiating new relationships:

*So sometimes when the university changes structure, introduces a unit, such as [name of the program]—you know, the seminar programs offered for Higher Degree Research students—then academics such as those in my role need to be in touch with different people. So maybe in the past it was offered by the librarians, but now it may be shifted to another unit in the university. Likewise, maybe it used to be somewhere else, and then now that person, or that unit, has been amalgamated as part of the library.* (Academic–Section head–A7)

Evidently, structural changes happened constantly in various parts of the university, which in turn created dynamic impacts on changing roles of different communities. However, there seemed to be a gap in the way changes were effectively communicated across the university, faculties, the library, and related partners.

Another important finding of the research revealed the university as a complex social and hierarchical system in which faculties, libraries and related agencies were structured to work quite independently of each other. Participants experienced the pressure of structural separation in different ways and to different extents. Most of them found such a structure did not help with connecting people. Rather, it made the communities quite isolated in the way they thought about their roles and acted separately instead of working in a more collegial fashion:

*I think that the bureaucracy of the university can hinder some of those collaborative relationships, and we’re definitely a siloed organisation. So even in the faculty we’re in silos.* (Academic–Tutor–A12)

*The kind of broader structure, it’s a bit— the library is like a faculty in that there’s not a lot of overlap between the high level between library and faculty, but it is on that kind of personal level that I’ve spoken about that makes the most difference.* (Academic–Section head–A2)

In this case, instead of waiting until there was an established structure to connect people, some academics overcame the structural complication and top-down procedures required for initiating and collaborating with partners of other departments, and made their own effort to personally contact library staff for collaboration. The relationship between academics and library staff consequently varied to a great extent depending on the personality and interests of individual academics as well as their availability. Some academics were more favourable
towards working with library staff to enhance student engagement and produce good learning outcomes:

I've approached the learning skills advisors and the librarians to work together, but no one encouraged me to do it. Or no one motivated me to do it. I think whatever happened is because of individuals, and people who are passionate and interested in getting good student engagement and producing good outcomes for students (Academic–A13)

Other academics were less likely to initiate collaboration with the library:

I didn't really have time to do anything but teach. (Academic–A14)

In addition to the independent work structure between faculty and library, the university used a separate job classification system, namely academic staff and professional staff (covering academics and librarians, respectively). Under these different job systems, academics and librarians were entitled to different income rates, incentives, privileges and promotion. The entitlements for academic staff were typically assumed to be greater than the ones for professional staff. It should be noted that not all entitlements were privileges for academics; for example, study leave was not automatically given to every academic; they had to work hard to earn it. However, the academic divide has still created issues of power asymmetry, which influenced the perceptions of both academics and library staff about each other’s role and position in their collaborative relationship (Further discussion on this point is given in section 5.4).

Main insights 5.1:

The university structure highlighted the importance of the presence of library staff in the senior management team and various teaching and learning committees where they could be more informed and engaged with university leaders’ decision-making processes, but the useful roles of some committees in collaboration practice was unclear.

There were constant changes in the university’s social and governance structure over time and campuses, but effective communication of change to support collaboration was still lacking.

Faculties and library were structured to work independently rather than collaboratively. Consequently, collaboration happened more successfully at the personal level rather than through formal procedures or arrangements.

The job classification systems for academic staff and professional staff had created a perpetual divide between academics and librarians.

5.2 Library–faculty collaboration structure

This section explores the structure of collaboration between library and faculties, and between library staff and academics from a structurationist perspective. It presents the main case study
findings on various structuration elements that yield insights into the nature and complexity of such collaborative partnerships. As Giddens (1984) has noted, “various forms of constraint are thus also, in varying ways, forms of enablement. They serve to open up certain possibilities of action at the same time as they restrict or deny others” (p. 173).

5.2.1 Structured vs. unstructured systems

During late 2000, in a move designed to enhance the learning experiences of students, an organisational restructure relocated academics working in the university’s academic skills and language teaching unit to the same division as the library. These academics became library staff, working in the library under the job title of academic skills advisers. They worked with liaison librarians in a team structure to support the development of students’ learning and communication skills, and information and research skills in the university.

The library collaboration structure to work with faculties and academics reflected the complexity of a large university and its disciplinary structures. Since this research was focused on faculty relationships with the library in teaching, learning, and research skills development only the particular library education and research related roles were selected from the very complex and hierarchical organisational structure (see Figure 5-2).

![Figure 5-2: Library educational collaboration structure at the Australian university](image-url)

At the senior level of the hierarchy, the library had a university librarian, an education-focused associate librarian, and a research-focused associate librarian. At the middle level, there were a number of library branch managers, an academic skills manager, an information literacy librarian, and many liaison team leaders and coordinators. Library liaison staff were organised into embedded library liaison teams working with a particular faculty. The team leaders were
usually located in particular campuses where the faculties had greater roles, and they managed their embedded library liaison team members to work with academics of designated faculties across the campuses. In some large branch libraries, liaison team leaders could also have roles as library branch managers and/or research and learning coordinators. The embedded library team consisted of liaison librarians and academic skills advisers who might be working in more than one library branch or faculty and across the campuses. These discipline oriented groups of library professionals were managed by the liaison team leaders when working with academics, but they also worked under the direction of their library branch managers, the research and learning coordinators as well as the information skills managers and the academic skills manager.

The library’s hierarchical collaboration structure was aimed at fostering a coordinated approach to collaboration with faculties, as well as showing how individual liaison library staff were expected to collaborate with academics within the discipline. However, the structure seemed more complicated at each library branch. Some liaison staff worked mainly in one branch but were team members of two faculty liaison teams across several campuses.

Apart from the management structure of five managers and coordinators who might be based in different campuses, liaison staff had line supervisors. Interestingly, some branch managers who could be a team leader and learning coordinators might be based on distant campuses. They worked with staff mainly through emails and met several times a year. In this instance, communication and collaboration under the highly hierarchical structure could be constrained at the coalface:

*The library is very, very hierarchical … . Usually doesn’t have much to do with students but the library sort of policy is that connection with the faculty should be through the liaison team leader, which for my purposes is not useful usually. I am used to just going directly across to the faculty and I can contact anybody in the faculty from tutors, lecturers, heads of school, Associate Dean Education … .* (Academic skills adviser–A17)

*There’s sort of the different reporting lines; the branch structure versus the – the fact that the two exist; the faculty team structure and the branch structure existing, kind of co-existing – it works, but I don’t know … I think it probably works because the people in the roles make it work.* (Liaison librarian–A20)

At the faculty level, collaboration with library staff had not been as structured as in the library. Although all the library team managers participated in some of the most senior academic committees of the faculties, there was no person in charge of coordinating academics to work with library liaison staff nor could clear directions for collaboration be identified.

*To be honest, I don’t think there’s been a whole lot of information from above or encouragement or motivation to work with the library.* (Academic–A13)

*With this faculty*, there are five departments and those departments don’t talk to each other very much. So if I want to do something for students from all departments like final year project
workshops…I’ve got to liaise with all the relevant people from across the departments and try to work out a timetable…the fact that they don’t understand how each other works is a problem. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

Some academics found that the current faculty structure seemed too inflexible to support the move from traditional education toward a blended learning environment, in which working together as a group or as a cluster of people is essential.

I don’t think it’s particular to the library/faculty relationship. I think faculty structures are 20th, 19th century and the problem is we have to teach in a 21st century environment. (Academic–A6)

It’s not so much like getting together and working out how they could be contributing or how we could use their services within each unit. (Academic–Tutor–A1)

At the individual level, given the thorough embeddedness of the library liaison teams in the faculty structure, there was a lack of a holistic collaboration approach to how the partnership could be initiated and developed to fit with the overall course structure and student year levels. Established protocols indicated the participation of only senior library staff in senior university committees and faculties’ meetings, but there was no arrangement for the participation of library liaison staff in faculties’ meetings. The lack of a governance structure to facilitate collaboration at the grass roots level constrained their opportunities for interaction:

There is not a particular structure to it [collaboration]. It’s very organic … It would be nice if that just was an automatic thing. I mean you don’t want to take up all their time. But sometimes it is useful for you to actually sit in on their meetings and actually listen to the issues that they’ve got. Because it reveals quite a lot of what happening in that particular department, and then you can go well hey, we can help with that. (Academic skills adviser–A16)

There’s not so much at second and third year. It’s very ad-hoc. It’s not planned…It would be really good for me to have a meeting every year with all the heads of department you know, but that never happens so I meet with the central faculty group. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

The lack of working procedures and guidelines for working in partnership with faculties impacted on the way library collaborators initiated the relationship. Some library staff took advantage of every informal opportunity to communicate with academics, to understand their needs and to offer relevant programs, whilst other library team members chose to extend their partnership based on historical and existing relationships rather than creating new ones. Once they had developed some credibility through successful programs or teaching units, the relationships with academics were built and grew from there.

I think it’s about having a track record. I think that word of mouth is a really great thing. (Liaison librarian–A26)
With faculty members, the current collaboration approach evolved based on their needs and their expectation of the collaboration outcomes. However, academics who taught first year students had more structured activities with the library.

We worked with an academic skills adviser from the library who came in and gave mini lectures, into my first year class, to give practical advice about how to study, how to take notes, how to prepare for exams, and I thought it went really well. (Academic–A10)

… because first year is where you want to establish good learning habits and good assignment habits. (Academic–Section head–A2)

### 5.2.2 The merger of academic skills and English language teaching units into the library

The merger of the academic skills and English language teaching unit into the library organisation was seen as a very important change of structure, exerting a significant impact on the progress of library collaboration within the university. On the other hand, this change of structure also created various contextual influences on systemic, social and professional elements of the university and the library in particular. This section touches on the experiences of academic skills advisers and librarians in the early stages of the transition. Further impacts of the merger are discussed throughout the chapter.

Academic skills advisers were academics with expertise in education who, prior to the organisational restructure that relocated them into the same organisational unit as the library, had worked in a dedicated educational support unit. The restructure was designed to better integrate academic support services across the university, with a view to developing collaborative partnerships that would enhance students’ learning and information skills. In the early stages of the transition, all academic skills advisers were supervised by an academic skills manager and met monthly for work directions and discussion. However, this arrangement proved very time-intensive and did not mesh with the library collaboration strategies. Hence, the library liaison team structure with academic skills advisers and liaison librarians working together was formed to enhance further integration of academic skills.

The complementary expertise that the academic skills advisers bring to work done jointly with the liaison librarians in library collaboration teams interacting with disciplinary faculties had enhanced the academic role of the library to the faculties. The skills advisors’ roles in the library liaison team seemed to be clearly recognised by academics in different faculties:

… because you’ve got that expertise in teaching as well as the library plus us as teachers, the subject matter experts, we can work together on building our collaborative relationships … . Before the collaboration was a bit I suppose it was two way communication … but the relationship [now] is much more collaborative I suppose and much more– we’re able to really think much more carefully about what they could do and what we were doing. (Academic–Tutor–A12)
I think they bring a different perspective and they have a different area of expertise. And, personally, I work better—I like working with other people and I think it helps to broaden your perspective and you kind of learn from each other . . . . (Academic—Section head—A15)

I think this is one of the good things about the way the library organises. [They have] the academic skills unit and they have librarians who are subject or discipline specific librarians. I think that’s really useful. (Academic—Section head—A2)

However, academic skills advisers and liaison librarians had different experiences with the organisational restructure. For the academic skills advisers, the move to the library meant a change from being classified as ‘academic’ staff to ‘professional’ staff. To some, this represented a loss of power and academic autonomy. Some chose to return to an academic position within a faculty or to leave the university altogether prior to the merger, and new staff were appointed to academic skills adviser positions within the new ‘professional’ structure. Those who had come from the earlier structure tended to find adjusting to the new set up more difficult than did those who were employed some time later under the new arrangements.

The reflections from academic skills advisers below indicate this diversity and the changes over time, from early apprehension about the move, to a much more positive attitude as the organisational change became embedded and its benefits demonstrated.

There were many people ... unhappy about the change ... because they felt the role of the ... academic skills advisers had been diminished ... and there was a lot of scepticism about how it would work. My background is education . . . . And I haven’t worked for a library before, so this was very new to me and I found that it was quite challenging because of the very different culture and also the whole range of the library areas that I had no idea about the professional expertise in that. I attended the meeting that was all about the library system and structure and procedures which were completely alien to me. So a lot of the initial feelings of the academic skill advisers [were] that they were not happy to work in the library [as] they felt that their professional credibility was diminished. (Senior library staff—A21)

Another academic skills adviser who was recruited after the merger had quite a contrasting perspective:

I think [the merged structure] provides us a great opportunity. We do not see it as amalgamation of two professions. I see it as more providing one portal through which academics can have access to two different [sets of] expertise. Librarians actually have [varied] expertise ... not just information research skills but also research data management ... copyright officers, ... expertise in research infrastructure [etc.] . . . . [The] liaison librarian and ... academic skills adviser are, in a way, very complementary roles. [The merged structure] ... provides a portal for academics ... to access this expertise that the library has. [With regard to] the organisational change thing ... it’s not something that takes place very quickly; it’s a gradual process of learning about each other. We ... [attend] each other’s classes; we work collaboratively in our projects and programs and so on. I think we have reached a certain stage at the moment where we do actually have a very mutual respect, which is heavily grounded on the
understanding of each other’s expertise. ... I think, actually, we can rely on each other’s expertise, which is a very positive relationship ... . There are various liaison librarians and academic skills advisers working with the faculties and ... we see it ... as an organisational working relationship rather than just individuals just going off and doing things ... . (Academic skills adviser–Sessional academic staff–A25)

A further significant characteristic was the perceived competence and knowledgeability of individuals, which was important for building respect and trust within a collaborative partnership. One example of this was the increasingly diverse skill base of academic skills advisors: from once being mainly (English) ‘language and learning’ teachers, to now having an academic base in a particular discipline:

... now [academic skills advisors] are coming from all areas of the university–people with interest in new communication technologies ... like e-learning, people from science–a much broader range. ... And their knowledge of research and writing and communication skills is from their own experience [as researchers and academics]. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

From the liaison librarians’ perspectives, the merger created both constraining and enabling impacts on their work practices. There were certain tensions among librarians with the academic skills advisers coming to the library and changing the way librarians had traditionally done their work. The gap in the areas of expertise, work culture, scope of practice and professional demarcation in the early transition stage were notable challenges (see further discussion in sections 5.4 and 5.5). Nevertheless, over time, the restructure provided impetus to collaborate much more closely with the academics than they had done before:

Look for us it's been huge. Well not only change, but a huge benefit. Because the academic skills advisers, they work more with the academic type skills, where the librarians work with the information literacy skills. They're two sort of sets of skills that overlap in certain places, but they are quite distinct. So I think having the academic skills advisers working in the library has given us a lot more – how would I say it – more credibility in some ways with the academics than we might have had before. And the academics always say, oh yes, we love the library and we think the library services are great and you know, and blah. But we noticed a difference when the academic skills actually came on board with us, because they're teaching academic writing skills and things like that. (Liaison librarian–A26)

So I think the structure itself provides a lot of opportunity for collaboration ... I guess it's– what can be a constraint is how that structure works on a day to day basis. Sometimes, if there are communication breakdowns, or a lack of clarity around what we're trying to achieve or boundaries perhaps, someone might think, "Well, I can do this." But others think, "No, I can't do that. That's not our role. We shouldn't be doing that." So I think the structure itself definitely promotes the idea of collaboration and partnership with academics. (Liaison librarian–A20)
Main insights 5.2:
The organisational structure of the library was complex and hierarchical, which reflected the complexity of the broader university structure. The library team embedded structure had facilitated collaboration between the library and the faculties. However the multi-layered structures presented some challenges not only in the daily work practices of liaison staff, but also in communication between the team members, and between the team members and the faculties.

Faculty structures were still more oriented towards the conventional teaching model rather than a blended learning environment. Therefore, an adequate faculty staffing structure to coordinate academics with library staff is necessary to make collaboration happen.

Collaboration approaches from both sides of library and faculty were unstructured and need-driven. Collaboration happened mainly based on existing relationships, personal relationships, and word-of-mouth.

The change of structure, i.e. the merger, had brought in complementary expertise of academic skills advisers to the academic role of librarians and enabled liaison staff to better engage with academics in teaching across the disciplines. However, whilst with academic skill advisors, it has presented the challenges of losing academic status, with librarians, it brought new changes in their roles and the scope of practice.

5.3 Collaboration contexts

Collaborative activities were mainly undertaken in three aspects of the library’s functions: client services and education, resources management, and research infrastructure. In the area of client services and education, collaborative activities were connected with university strategies in teaching, learning and research in faculties. In resources management, collaboration involved collection management, facilities and operations, information systems, communications and lectures online. In research infrastructure, library staff worked with faculties in research data management, building institutional repositories and publishing. This research focused on collaboration in library educational services for teaching, learning and research skills development for students located in Australian campuses of the university.

The whole faculty collaboration structure of the library, from the senior staff in the learning and research area to any library branches where academic skills advisers and liaison librarians were collocated, has enabled collaborative activities within the interdisciplinary team. The teams worked together with academics in various contexts involving faculty orientation and induction programs, development of academic and information skills for students, organisation of resources and library services for the courses, curriculum and course design, and teaching and tutoring. At the same time, it was interesting to note the positive and negative impacts of the broader structure on collaboration contexts, people and the outcomes.
5.3.1 Faculty orientation and induction programs

Faculty orientation and induction programs for first year students were among the better established activities, where library staff and academics worked together early in the semester. Library staff had become integral to orientation week. They organised programs and activities to help students become familiar with the physical locations, relevant programs and services of the university. This occasion was seen as an opportunity for initiating relationships among academic skills advisers and liaison librarians, and between the library team and academics.

*It's slowly becoming more together like the orientation we do together; we've really collaborated on orientation.* (Academic skills adviser–A17)

*This has all just come about doing Orientation. That was purely how the relationship started.* (Course administrator–A3)

Working on orientation programs provided opportunities for library staff to run further induction and transition programs tailored to the needs of a specific faculty or department. The transition programs may be organised in the form of brief transition sessions, or a series of workshops focusing on information literacy and academic skills that students generally need for successful completion of their course.

*For two and a half or three hours, we talk to them about how to do a literature review, using EndNote, finding more research, how to select right databases … we talked a lot about academic writing.* (Senior library staff–A24)

5.3.2 Research Skills Development framework

The Research Skills Development (RSD) framework was an important structure that informed collaboration activities among library liaison staff and academics (see Appendix 11). The framework provided useful structures with six stages of enquiry of research skills ranging from a low degree of student autonomy to a very high degree of researcher autonomy. It aims to support students and researchers in apprehending and developing research skills throughout their academic courses and research careers (Willison, & O'Regan, 2006). Currently, there are two versions: RSD5 and RSD7. RSD5 was designed to assess the degree of autonomy in research for students, whilst RSD7 extended RSD 5 to accommodate the greater importance of research skills for researchers.

In the university, the Research Skills Development framework was accepted as a backbone for educational strategies. In particular, the RSD5 framework had started to be used by academics to embed research skills development in designing curriculum and assessment tasks for learning activities, units, courses, and programs of the different disciplines.

*I accommodate this research skills framework in every assessment I do … RSD is really, really crucial for students to learn, because if they have a marking rubric they know okay, this is a HD [High Distinction], this is an N [Fail]. Where do I want to be?* (Academic–A5)
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"We are incorporating it [RSD] into our very detailed planning about course learning outcomes and right down to unit level across our graduate and undergraduate courses … So the library has assisted us, in aligning course development with RSD levels." (Academic–Section head–A9)

"I think the other advantage of the RSD is it’s been taken up by a variety of different disciplines, from IT to business to health. It’s got a wide range of applicability." (Academic–Section head–A15)

In the library, the Research Skills Development framework was a significant development. The framework was based on the Australian and New Zealand information literacy standard, which resonated well with librarians whilst the level of student autonomy in learning and research appealed to academic skills advisers.

"This appears to be a fantastic tool that our staff could use to start conversations with and to really work with because they could see their own professional expertise being used within that." (Senior library staff–A21)

Library staff were among the first to pioneer the framework and actively incorporate it into training. It was an elective topic of the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education program for newly employed academics and interested academics. Such involvement made library staff known as a good resource for supporting the framework’s implementation. The framework therefore was the underpinning of collaboration and communication between library staff and academics. It leveraged the academic role of library staff in working with skills development and unit assessment:

"It was really good because I have mapped out what I wanted and I had written the specifications, but it was really great to actually send that off to them [library staff] to have a look at it and say, “What do you think of it?” So just to get back that, “Oh, yes, it looks really good, and it is giving what you want to achieve, that seems to be the way to achieve it”. So having that validation was fantastic… One of the big suggestions was I said, “I’ve got a rubric for marking but I’m not happy with it.” And so they were able to provide me with one for a similar unit based on the RSD framework." (Academic–A6)

"When I start preparing rubrics, I actually was all the time in the library or I was sending emails to the liaison librarian or to the skills adviser. I just make sure that I’m on the right track." (Academic–A5)

Apart from the positive impacts of the Research Skills Development framework, there were issues with the governance structure constraining the widespread application of the framework, which also resulted in limiting opportunities for collaboration. Despite the university policy of using the framework as an educational model for curriculum and assessment design, communication of the framework to the wider academic community remained limited. The RSD framework was largely unknown among the senior faculty staff and academics interviewed. It seemed that faculties did not create an enabling structure to support the implementation of the framework throughout their educational programs:
I guess you have to play the structures of the Faculty. If you could convince the Associate Dean Education to get behind it in a meaningful way rather than a lip service way, to actually put resources behind it rather than just say, “Oh now do that but we’re not going to resource it.” (Academic–A6)

The response of this academic to the structure resounds with Giddens’ (1984, p. 19) arguments that the production and reproduction of social practices draw upon both rules and resources. The RSD is a part of the institution’s structure that collaborators could draw upon to act, but there were inadequate ‘resources’ to drive the actions. Hence, there were difficulties and challenges to individual participants in implementing skills development programs across the units, courses and year levels. This academic also emphasised how important it was for the faculty leaders to interact with the RSD and to make the RSD influence practice:

… And I would love for our Faculty to actually look at the course progressions. Like how to really embed that across all the units, because the problem is if you try and do it in your unit then–then you can’t take it all on. You actually need to know that, well, in first year, this has been emphasized and so they should come to second year with these skills. (Academic–A6)

5.3.3 Building information literacy and research skills for students

Beyond the orientation and general induction, organising training classes in developing information and academic skills for students was one of the most significant areas of collaboration that academics and library staff worked on. The complementary expertise of the academic skills advisers and liaison librarians in the library liaison team enabled collaboration in various educational contexts. Collaborative activities to be covered by the liaison team entailed the whole spectrum of research skills development, from developing questions, addressing research questions, finding information, managing information, reading, analysing, synthesising, and writing up information. This was conducted either in separate classes or in a unit’s regular lectures or tutorials.

Findings of collaboration in teaching contexts supported Montiel-Overall (2005b) and Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh (2006) about the association of time and space with the three levels of collaboration, i.e., coordination, cooperation and collaboration.

Collaboration with academics reached the highest level when library staff were directly involved in joint planning and teaching of a subject, part of the teaching team and when collaboration was part of the normal work routine and not an additional burden for the academic. In one faculty, it was explained that:

The reason [library staff] are treated and accepted as colleagues, is that they do teach with us. If they were library staff that didn’t teach in the faculty, [academics] would not accept them as having a voice at the table. They are seen as teaching staff because they do teach into our units. (Academic–Section head–A9)

Co-teaching skills development during timetabled lectures and tutorials was the most effective approach to help students achieve a high standard of academic work in the assessment tasks. These timetabled teaching sessions, which were called embedded classes, provided better
opportunities to collaborate within the dynamic teaching contexts and to support students with more tailored instructions.

He could link in to what we were doing. So it’s a much more tailored arrangement. That’s because he did the session in our tutorials rather than being separate, go to the library for this, he could see what our classroom was like and the class mix and makeup, which I think’s really important. Because those group dynamics have had a big impact for me for this year on how the classes have gone. So that was great that he could come and see that, as well as have a tailored response that he could do too. I really liked how he could read—he really read the class well. (Academic–Tutor–A12)

By expanding skills development training opportunities and embedding across the units and across the faculties, library staff worked with academics on the assessment tasks and the structure of the units. They identified the implicit skills that needed to be developed and then examined how the skills could be assessed in assignment tasks. They also offered help to academics in developing assessment rubrics and incorporating skills across the assignments. These interactive activities with academics and their course materials enabled library staff to learn how to teach those skills within the units and get involved in teaching in the timetabled lectures and tutorials.

However, the greatest constraints to faculty collaboration with the library came from the heavy workloads of most academics, the overcrowded curriculum and the pervasive perception that additional effort put into teaching did not enhance promotion prospects in a university fixated on research outcomes. Consequently, there were very few cases where academics worked with the library liaison team to teach all the skills in a systematic way within units or courses. Rather, academics showed greater interest in leveraging specific information and academic skills that their students needed to do some specific assessment tasks:

A lot of them come through straight from high school into university but the tone of writing in is much more formal in academic writing compared to high school, so it is a big shock for students. I have found that are like “I was getting A pluses last year at high school and now I am only getting a C or credit for my essay writing” and it’s just because their language is not that formal or they are not charting different references. (Academic–Tutor–A1)

When I had last year or second year students and I had group presentations, I asked library staff to come as well and talk about how every student has to be prepared to work in their small groups, how to make work and responsibility split fairly…and what kind of ethics has to be taken into consideration to avoid disappointment and free riding. There is a lot of free riding, everywhere… (Academic–A5)

Because this assignment requires—we really want library staff—it’s about showing that students have consulted authoritative sources. So the citing and referencing has to be really good, and we’ve had so many problems with this unit in the past, so we get them (Librarian) in to give some specific citing and referencing advice. (Academic–A6)
When academics could not arrange timetabled classes for the skills training programs, the library teams offered ‘parallel classes’ which were similar types of workshops but normally without the participation of academics. These classes happened outside of the scheduled lecture and tutorial times either in the library or other lecture theatres. In such situations, collaboration referred to the level of cooperation or coordination since participants worked more independently and displayed a lower level of commitment, time and effort (Montiel-Overall, 2005b).

5.3.4 Organising information resources for courses

The overwhelming increase of information resources in recent decades has created not only challenges for building information skills for students but also in organising relevant resources and collection development for courses. Library staff needed to work with academics in selecting and assessing resources that needed to be purchased. It was noted among librarians that academics and students should have access to the resources that met their teaching, learning and research objectives. In some faculties, they worked together in providing teaching materials and readings that students could access for all the units. In each unit, academics provided the library with the reading lists that library staff needed to organise and make the requested resources accessible to students.

In line with library resource organisation, the library teams worked with academics to create disciplinary library guides to give students seamless access to all the supporting resources from the library websites. They organised not only the important sources of subject related materials such as books, journals, databases, websites, and reference works but also the learning skills programs to define academic sources of information and strategies to work on specific types of assessment tasks. In some faculties where the library teams and academics had achieved high-end collaboration, they worked together to create assignments for courses, along with the needed library resources and skills programs available for students on the library websites.

**Main insights 5.3**

The main collaboration contexts occurred in faculty orientation and induction programs, development of academic and information skills for students, organisation of resources and library services for the courses, and curriculum design and teaching. The emphasis of collaboration activities was placed on skills programs based on students’ year levels (i.e. first year and final year), compulsory and core subjects or academic skills for research students.

The Research Skills Development framework became significant in the library since it resonated very well with both liaison librarians and academic skills advisers, which was useful for resolving the professional gap between the two groups. However, the framework was not generally known in the academic community due to the lack of structure and resources to support the application of the framework systematically.

Structured activities such as in faculty Orientation day opened up social interaction opportunities and helped in initiating new relationships and follow-up activities.
Collaborative contexts were driven by the needs of academics to improve specific skills of students. The ideal collaboration contexts were in the timetabled classes, which was also referred to as the highest level of collaboration since both parties worked together with a strong commitment of time and effort. The level of collaboration also depended on the relationships between academics and library staff as well as their personality, interest, and availability of time. In most cases, academics and library staff worked independently with some coordination when needed.

5.4 Power asymmetry amongst different professional groups in the collaborative relationship

There was a degree of power asymmetry evident in some collaborative relationships between academics and librarians, academic skills advisors and librarians, and academic skills advisors and academics. As each group had its own traditions, roles, ways of working, and professional culture, there were many potential challenges to collaboration, especially in the early stages of the relationship.

5.4.1 Role of individual participants and the scope of practice in a collaborative partnership

Academics at the university had three main areas of responsibility: education of students, research, and ‘service’ (to the university, to the wider community). In contrast to those classified as professional staff, academics had considerable autonomy in how they work, where they work, and when they work, as long as they meet their basic responsibilities and required deliverables. However, their workload can be considerable with ever-increasing pressures to research, apply for research grants, and publish in high-quality arenas. Particular sources of frustration for many academics were the decreasing emphasis placed on education compared to research, and the escalating overall workload, as evidenced in the following comments:

… there is a lot of pressure to do research and I’m not a researcher, I’m a teacher. That’s where my passions and my interests lie. And the way universities are running at the moment, there’s not a lot of emphasis put on the teaching. (Academic skills adviser–A16)

… When it comes down to it, the university values research output and if you go for a promotion, that’s what’s recognised, how much grant money you bring in, how many postgraduate [research] students you graduate and how many publications you produce. And education, it’s just assumed that you do it and you’re not really given any credit for it, really, when it comes down to it, even though the students are the ones that bring in the money that largely supports the day-to-day running of the university. You try to be a good educator, you try to be a good researcher and you try to meet all your service obligations and the university has the expectation you do exceptionally well in all three. And it’s really hard to do all three well and have a life and that’s the nature of being an academic these days. (Academic–Section head–A15)
Library staff who worked in library liaison teams were also responsible for handling library technical work, designing learning programs as well as serving the increasing number of enrolled students across different faculties and campuses. Typically, a library liaison team member needed to work at the reference desk during certain hours; liaise with team members on other campuses to look after students there; teach in library classes; and teach with academics in different units, different departments, and faculties while working on multidisciplinary academic rubrics and other research projects. They had a very high student-library staff ratio, which was acknowledged by an academic who collaborated with them:

> And if you think of [liaison staff name], she is one person for 4500 students. I’m not saying she sees 4500 students here at [campus name] but she’s one person for all those students… there’s a lot of demands on their time. (Academic–Section head–A15)

Undoubtedly, there was a growing intensity in work and changing roles that both library staff and academics needed to handle to achieve the current university key performance indicators. However, each group needed to fulfil different performance criteria. Academics needed to place a higher priority on doing research than teaching. This explains why this study found that collaboration with library staff in teaching activities was not one of the primary intentions of academics. This contrasts with the significance of collaboration in the roles of library staff:

> I think the library had placed a high priority on collaboration and engagement with academic staff and then it’s a matter of us managing our role and the various tasks we’re required to do and to try to do it in such a way that we’re able to collaborate at the same time as doing some of the technical aspects of our work. So look for opportunities to collaborate. So I think it’s a very big component—part of our role is the collaboration. (Liaison librarian–A20)

Strategically, there were initiatives of capacity building for library staff in teaching either via peer learning programs or encouragement to be involved in academic activities. Nevertheless, librarians perceived their roles in various different ways. Some were very willing and pioneering in moving to a teaching and research focus, while others hesitated or were resistant to change:

> Some people will definitely say, "No, I don’t do research. This is my role. This is what I do." So that’s our culture; traditional culture of librarians as professional staff and not crossing that boundary into academia. (Liaison librarian–A20)

> Some of my colleagues said “oh you know, I had to go and read up about rubrics and learn it so that I could teach this workshop’ and it’s not part of the librarian’s usual knowledge. So on both sides, there’s some confusion about what is our role, what am I supposed to do? Where are the parameters? (Academic skills advisor–A17)

Interestingly, the role of library staff in teaching was acknowledged differently across the faculties. In one faculty, library staff were considered as teaching colleagues due to their extensive involvement in teaching units across the faculty, research skills development modules, and faculty committees (see further details in section 5.4.3). But in some other
faculties, the role and expertise of library staff in teaching and skills development was not well established:

I think librarians today are very much informed about the skills that these HDR [Higher Degree Research] students need to acquire. But not for teaching I don’t think, you know, the undergrad courses or postgrad courses … in terms of developing curriculums for those units for individual subjects, I don’t think that’s happening. (Academic–Section head–A7)

Another important finding highlighted a clear expectation of the scope of practice in collaboration between library staff and academics, and between the library liaison team members of academic skills advisers and liaison librarians. In some faculties, academics seemed uncertain about the skill sets and expertise that the library team could contribute to the partnership:

I think they [academics] might not be aware of what the library staff can offer or they might see it in only a very limited way … . I have to be wary that I don’t become a teaching assistant or a research assistant. That again comes down to boundaries of my role being a professional. I’m a professional. I stand in my own right as a professional and an expert in my field and I’m not an academic’s assistant … I always have to make sure I’m aware of that. That I’m not being someone’s assistant. Yeah, equal footing. (Liaison librarian–A20)

I think there’s a great deal of expertise within the library but I also feel that it can be a sensitive issue and that the library needs to continue to approach this carefully. Reassure faculty that we tend not to be content experts and that our area of expertise is more in the area of the practicalities of teaching and learning and also in curriculum and assessment design. (Academic skills adviser–Sessional academic staff–A19)

Likewise, there were also tensions raised from the unclear professional boundaries between the library liaison team members. Academic skills advisers appeared to have broader roles than their liaison librarian counterparts in practical collaboration with academics. They were responsible for teaching oral and written communication skills and study skills, emphasising their expertise in teaching and learning, while librarians delivered the information literacy skills and related information searching strategies. The structure that merged the two professional groups created unsatisfying experiences for some academic skills advisers, since their roles were hidden within the library team structure:

Our feeling was a bit that we were being taken over by the library … . There’s communication skills; there’s study skills and there’s information research skills. Librarians do information research skills. Academic skills advisers do study skills and communication skills but they’re sort of bundled under learning skills … . There is some overlap where we both operate but I mean I can’t do a librarian job and a librarian can’t do my job but there’s a kind of insistence that everybody be kind of intermingled which is just frustrating. (Academic skills adviser–A17)
However, from the liaison librarian side, they did not intend to work beyond their scope of practice. They were also concerned about the clarification of their roles in the team.

*It’s just around the clarity around the scope of our practice and perhaps in terms of collaboration. Different team members have different skill sets and they might be able to do things that others can’t ... That can’t be fulfilled by everyone.* (Liaison librarian–A20)

There were certain differences in terms of knowledge and skills that each group contributed to the teamwork collaboration and the faculty collaboration. The cross-disciplinary library liaison team structure enabled the team to attain the complementary expertise of different member groups and extend the overall scope of their practice. But “the constraining aspects of power are experienced as sanctions of various kinds … there are obviously major asymmetries in the constraint/enablement relation. One person’s constraint is another’s enabling” (Giddens, 1984, pp. 175-176). Academic skills advisers found the merger with the library enabled them to work as a cluster of groups rather than as individuals, as they had done previously in the language and academic skills unit. However, the restructure blurred their roles under the title of library staff. In contrast, librarians found the advantage of the merger lay in leveraging the role of library collaboration in academic scholarship, but the change of structure seemed to make their roles extend beyond normal library professional practice.

Intriguingly, underpinning the perception of the scope of practice of each group was the professional divide between the academic group (which included the academic skills advisers) and the librarian group.

### 5.4.2 Professional divide

Professional divide was one of the most perceptible structural constraints bearing on the perception of academics and library staff about their working partners. It included different perspectives from participants about the status divide, knowledge divide, and professional credibility. The professional boundary existed and was reaffirmed by the social and governance structure, which provided academics with more privileges in addition to their income incentives, working status, and academic entitlement. Each group sees themselves in a certain way. Predictably, academics are deemed to have greater power and status in the university community and in society.

Recognition of the impact of power became more extensive when the merger of the language and teaching unit into the library was perceived as making to academic skills advisers lose their academic status. Academic skills advisers used to be academics with entitlements to all academic privileges, but when they came to work in the library, their position description and entitlements came under the classification of professional staff. A librarian noted the challenges of the restructure for academic skill advisers:

*… they came to the library and their salary was decreased slightly. The academic skills people were academic status before, now they’re the same level as me which is professional level … . But some of them were considered to be lecturers before, slightly more well-paid, more flexible hours. They were expected to do research. They were expected to go off and present conference papers. There was a more*
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collegiate – because they were on the academic staff award – this is their entitlements for leave and staff development. They can go off and do a big research project and do a study tour overseas. Well if I went to my boss and said I’d like to go and do a study tour overseas to learn more about libraries, my boss would say "oh yes, you’re welcome, but there is no money". (Liaison librarian-Sessional academic staff–A18)

To a certain extent, the social structure of different professions in the university created power disadvantages for librarians when they collaborated with academics. It made them more susceptible to the perception and behaviours of their academic partners over the collaboration practice. They were classified as ‘professional’ staff, in service provision or service delivery oriented roles, and this affected the way that they were perceived by academics, and the way they saw themselves:

With librarians in most cases, although this isn’t true everywhere; we’re professional or general staff. There are places where they [librarians] have academic staff status, but in most places I’ve worked in Australia at the universities, we’re professional staff. (Liaison librarian–A20)

I think probably people who are in the service part of it, it’s probably easier that they can come, do their job and go home and not much beyond that. They’re paid to do a job, they do a job whereas an academic, you choose to go into the field because you do PhD, you do further study and it’s a bigger, broader job role. (Academic–Section head–A15)

One academic skills advisor who used to work as an academic expressed the view that some library staff were constrained in working effectively with academics due to feeling overawed by academic status:

They sort of, in their head [think] “this person’s got a PhD”, or “Professor-something”, and there is almost a little bit of being scared of them or very deferential to them. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

On the other hand, there were still academics who retained stereotypical images of librarians, which created a barrier of accepting the more expansive professional roles of librarians today. One librarian reacted to that traditional view:

Some academic staff ... don’t recognise that we have university qualifications, for example, master degrees. They may not see that we have moved beyond a kind of a technical role related to books. So when we make approaches to them about working in teaching or learning or [in a]more research-sophisticated way, they may not be open to that because they have us in a certain box. (Liaison librarian–A20)

She also mused over some academics in one faculty tending to perceive ‘professional staff’ as having lower status than themselves, and gaining respect as a collaborator when she became involved in research:
I think doing research and having published, which is what I’ve done, I get positive feedback about that. They think it’s good that as a librarian I’ve published and I do research with them. So I have ... gain[ed] some [respect]. It opens the door a bit. (Liaison librarian–A20)

Again, the gap in academic background and academic status formed issues of power asymmetry between the two groups. An academic shared a short conversation between herself and fellow academics when they talked about the librarian’s role in the courses:

But there are an awful lot of my colleagues who think that they are just people who shelve books. So they’re actually not aware of the services and support they can provide and are not even thinking to ask or incorporate ... . And sometimes they were very dismissive of what the library person was telling them because they’re not an academic; they’re just a library professional, so what would they know about those issues? (Academic–A6)

The structural tensions that existed between academic and professional staff were an invisible barrier affecting the perception and the intention to initiate collaboration. Giddens (1984) used the stratification model of the agent to illustrate the reflexive monitoring of activity that actors “routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move” (p. 5). In this case, librarians were aware of the difference in social qualities, the situational contexts and professional boundaries; nonetheless they showed a strong capacity for making sensible approaches to academics to encourage collaboration.

There are professional boundaries. There are, and I won’t deny that that’s the case. I mean, I don’t go in there and tell them what they should be doing in their unit. I mean we can go in and say ‘well, we noticed that there was a big gap with the transitioning students in their skills, and the academics did too. So there was a lot of talk about well, how can we fix it?’ That’s what brought on this transition to university program, with trying to fix this gap that we’ve both seen. ... I mean I try and approach it that, well, we’re there to fix a problem, and we’re not here to tell you what you should be doing. They’re the academics. They’re in charge of the unit. So I mean as long as we keep that perspective that we’re not there to tell them how to do their job, that’s usually probably the easiest way to get around it. (Liaison librarian–A26)

Academic skills advisers seemed to have more advantages in collaboration with academics due to their common teaching background. They worked with academics in developing academic skills for students in terms of writing, presentation or group work, then embedded these skills across units and faculties. They also had experience in developing assessment rubrics, the design of units, and co-teaching with academics in the lecture space.

They’ve had academic backgrounds themselves. So they’ve been involved with teaching for years and years and years and years. So they can relate to the academics as fellow colleagues whereas for me I find it not impossible to do that but it’s not quite so easy because libraries have always been a bit separate. It’s changing but – . (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–A18)
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I never found any kind of barrier, cultural, social barrier, as such. I can sort of see some people might find, for example, we are teachers, we are librarians while they are researchers. And maybe some people found something quite subtle, a subtle difference. I personally never found it. Mind you, then, I also do come from more of an academic background and, also, I have my own areas of research which I still quite actively contribute to. When they talk about various research projects and things like that, I can kind of see what they are talking about so that might be an advantage for me not to feel the barriers. (Academic skills adviser– Sessional academic staff–A25)

The broader teaching roles of academic skills advisers compared to liaison librarians were further observed by the researcher in a training session that was part of a transition program for new postgraduate students in one faculty. Academic skills advisers delivered five out of six sessions, teaching students about the academic expectations and research skills for postgraduate study as well as the written and oral communication skills for writing assignments, whilst liaison librarians conducted a single session about library information skills.

Another interconnected challenge, along with the status divide that librarians assumed, was the lack of teaching background when they turned to work more closely with academics in teaching and developing information literacy skills for students. However, it is interesting to note that few academics had teaching qualifications either, although this is changing as many universities are now mandating academics (particularly the newly recruited ones) to attend a graduate course in higher education. Probably, the social appreciation of the teaching role and a broader role in a skills development program might naturally give academic skills advisers the feeling of being senior to librarians, or make librarians more sensitive in their daily interaction. Consequently, conflicts sometimes arose from different perceptions about equality of position and the role of the team member:

Some of the staff still think – even though they’re being paid the same as me, they think they are a bit higher than me. They’re not. We are equal. But because they have big networks in the university and they’ve worked here a long time they think I’m different … . So a couple of times I’ve had to say to one or two of my colleagues, "we’re working equally ... we’re a team and we’re working at an equal level". (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–A18)

Giddens notes that “How far these are constraining qualities varies according to the context and nature of any given sequence of action or strip of interaction” (p. 177). The extent to which the constraints presented varied for individuals, libraries, and faculties depended on various contextual factors and the nature of their relationship. The next section reports an excellent case of collaboration in a faculty where the knowledge and skills that library staff contributed in order to transform the traditional teaching approach were greatly appreciated by academics.

5.4.3 An example case of successful collaboration

An in-depth interview with a senior academic of one faculty and a focus group with four library staff unveiled an exceptionally rewarding relationship between academics and library
staff. In this faculty, the close relationship with the library meant that library staff (librarians and academic skills advisors), as non-involved externals, were able to act as a circuit-breaker in the resolution of academic staff conflict over organisational changes such as restructuring courses or implementing new educational technologies. Library staff were regarded as teaching colleagues so they participated at the highest committee levels such as the Education committee of the faculty. The committee determined important matters of the course rules and development as well as the learning and teaching practice. Library staff had voting rights and a reserved seat at the table, which meant that they were well integrated into the decision-making processes of the faculty.

At the time, the faculty was moving from a more content focused course orientation toward a skills focused design, to be compliant with the Australian Qualifications Framework. They needed to redevelop their courses through demonstrating the achievement of learning outcomes, and of skilled based learning outcomes through assessment. Library staff were co-teaching with academics in developing information and research skills for students within the established units, whilst working with senior faculty staff to develop the new curriculum in aligning course developments with Research Skills Development levels. The knowledge and expertise of library staff in resolving education and research matters were highly valued:

[The] library has helped in developing a proposal for research [skills] training modules that are pitched to the different levels. So the idea is a graduated series of modules. They have a broader understanding of what we’re trying to achieve and how we might achieve that and they’re very much partners with us. More than partners – I’d say they’re leaders, really … I find them very professional, very knowledgeable, and very efficient. I’ve also found that [name of a senior librarian] has gone way beyond what I think is strictly her role in helping us develop proposals for research … . I’m incredibly grateful. (Academic–Section head–A9)

They do respect what we do and I think because we are sort of knowledgeable in [name of the discipline] research skills that are something the lecturers tend to like to leave to us to teach. (Senior library staff–A28)

Making changes to the course structures and programs to enhance the quality standard and high level of research outcome for students created a dilemma for academics and course management staff. The faculty had accepted a very high number of enrolments over the years, which made it difficult to accommodate the expectation that all students do a research unit. There was no increase in staffing to enable the faculty to provide one-on-one supervision for all students. In such a situation with resource constraints undermining the mandated reform, library staff proposed to the faculty different strategies to resolve the research supervision workload on their current staffing, whilst facilitating students to build their research capacity through a class based research module. As a result, faculty acknowledged the important contribution of library staff in easing their staffing burden and in making the changes happen more smoothly:
[Name of a senior librarian] has been fantastic in looking at, you know, how much of that process can be hived off to class based activities, where we can deal with the students as a group; other ways of which, we can reduce the supervision demand as much as possible, while at the same time, making it easier for students to do what they need to do. So, yes, I mean, expectations are consistently exceeded in working with library staff. They help us more than they really have to, I think. (Academic–Section head–A9)

Librarians and academic skills advisers were viewed by the faculty as techno-savvy, early adopters of new technologies, facilitators of online learning and the use of learning technologies, and catalysts for change, and were included in partnerships with the faculty to implement change. The faculty was moving toward blended learning methods using more online resources; many academics lacked expertise with these and were apprehensive about the changes. It caused a lot of tension and resistance among academics when the faculty deployed these changes or indeed implemented any type of new technology. The greatest constraints arose from the heavy workloads of most academics, the overcrowded curriculum and the widespread perception that additional effort put into teaching did not enhance promotion prospects in a university fixated on research outcomes. While the academics were quite divided, and resented spending time on using online facilities, library staff were seen as the pioneers who sensibly approached the issues and proposed feasible solutions and evidence of effectiveness of the technology in the library:

So I could always rely on the library staff to say, yes, I hear what you're saying. Yes, I acknowledge there's a problem, here are some things we can do. Here's a model that might work or here are elements of a plan and here's how we can support you on this. So they give you some hope. They offer solutions when other people only offer criticisms ... So they're very important partners in change within the faculty – very important advisors and catalysts for us. (Academic–Section head–A9)

Importantly, the successful catalyst role of library staff in change should be noted in the context of the culmination of relationship building over decades, in which library staff were co-teaching with academics. In this case, the faculty discipline involved a strong research focus, which required teaching research and writing skills. In the meantime, library liaison staff had strong capability in these areas and were able to contribute actively. It was explained why there was almost no professional divide in this faculty identified by either academics or library staff, unlike what was reported by all other faculties participating in this study.

I think there is less of a border between [name of the faculty] and [name of the library] staff than there are in other faculties that I've worked in, in the past, and there seems to be more—in some other faculties you can get a real divide between the two but here it's very much a part of—we are all on the same team and we are all out for the same sort of goals and there is respect on both sides, which is really important. (Liaison librarian–A31)

Another distinctive element of the faculty that made collaboration more successful was the very close proximity of the faculty and the library staff with whom they collaborated. The relevant discipline-specific library was located right in the faculty building on a common access level, which academics passed on the way to their offices or to the lecture rooms. The
centrally based location was deemed significant in gaining the perception among academics that the library was part of the faculty, disciplinary based staff.

They're onsite, you know, that proximity I think, is important. That feeling that we have professionals who understand our discipline, our students, our academics, very well. I think that is essential to the collaboration and that they are onsite and locally based. If it wasn't, if they were coming over from the main library, the staff would be saying, what's this person doing on the committee? You know, they might see them there as technical advisors, but they wouldn't see them as stakeholders, the way they do now. (Academic–Section head–A9)

This also helped to build the relationship naturally across formal and informal settings, and as such, enhanced interaction opportunities and the actual collaboration practice:

Well, there are about 70 academic staff plus sessional teachers who only teach at certain periods. So we have a good relationship with many of them, if not through teaching then through research. I would say we know, at least know those 70 and we would see them on the stairs or we would see them somewhere, say “Hi”. Or even if someone sitting on the top floor of [name of another building] might think I have a good idea, just to go down the stairs, walk over to the main library, find a subject librarian, talk about it, it loses that momentum whereas here, if they happen to be here and they are passing the library they will drop in. The lift is around the corner so if they are going up and down the lift they will pass our office. So I think that’s quite handy as well. (Senior library staff–A28)

The influence of space design and proximity upon collaboration was one of the important findings of the research. Further discussion on this aspect of the social and organisational structure is reported in section 5.7: ‘Time-space’.

Last but not least, the example showed the exceptional effort from management level to professional staff in making collaboration happen to the utmost degree. The senior library staff showed leadership in working with senior faculty management and the academics across key areas of faculty expertise such as in teaching, curriculum review and development, research, and project management. At the practitioner level, liaison librarians and academic skills advisers were very knowledgeable, committed, and flexible in working with the varied group of academics and their changing roles. On the other side, academics of the faculty were open to collaboration and respectful of library staff as they were with other faculty colleagues. Importantly, the faculty senior management not only appreciated the knowledge and expertise that library staff contributed to collaboration, but also provided local structure and funding to support their library partners:

We have a contract pricing system. We pay for the services, when they teach into our programs or they provide language and learning services, there is a payment arrangement … . If I want to ask [name of library staff member] to develop a level nine, research skills training module for online delivery, I’ve got to pay for that and she will give me a costing … . You know everybody has got to make hard decisions now about costing things and paying for things and we don’t expect the library to do things for nothing. (Academic–Section head–A9)
To summarise, there were various contributing factors that ensured a successful partnership between academics and library staff. Strong evidence was found in the sound structure for collaboration between faculty and library, leadership and management support, and the faculty resource funding framework. The equal partnership was achieved since the teaching capability and disciplinary knowledge of library staff diminished the divide between academics and professionals. The importance of social factors such as the longevity of the relationship and the proximity of the library to faculty should be noted as key success factors.

Main insights 5.4:

Power asymmetry happened in all three groups: academics, academic skills advisers, and librarians, but the level varied between the groups and individuals. The causes of power unevenness were mainly due to the varied impacts of rules and structure on different groups, work pressure under the limitation of staffing resources, the status divide between the academic and professional groups, the particular knowledgeability and expertise that each group possessed, their distinctive job entitlements, and the priority they gave to collaboration.

Power asymmetry caused personal conflicts, confusion in the scope of practice, dissatisfaction about the unequal relationship, and perceptual barriers among participants who aimed to form the partnership or to move toward greater collaboration.

Successful collaboration was found when there was almost no barrier in the perception of roles, status, knowledgeability, supporting structure, and resources, and in an environment where exceptional effort, the longevity of the relationship, and the proximity of the library to the faculty were important elements.

5.5 Socio-cultural dynamics

Both academics and librarians have encountered a dynamic change in their professions in recent decades. Librarians’ traditional roles as “collection specialists” have been gradually shifted to “faculty liaison” due to the constant development of technology and social media, global change in education systems, the changing needs of information users, and emerging models of scholarly communication (Jain, 2013). The changing profession reflects the transition from a more technical-related work focus to a more social and collaborative work role that goes beyond the library walls toward the extending university community, particularly academics. Moving with the trend, the library had developed a collaboration structure to facilitate collaborative activities with academics across various disciplines. The academic profession had also been undergoing the challenges of a changing paradigm: from a traditional class-based teaching method toward a more blended learning environment, in which working in teams and collaboration with external parties was essential in driving the change. However, despite much of the change of roles that has occurred, each profession still has its respective culture and values that influence their perceptions about themselves and about their collaboration partners, as well as the way they act in the partnership.
This section discusses important distinctions in the work culture of academics and library staff, and then highlights the similarities of and differences between academic and library culture.

5.5.1 Individual vs. collaborative culture

In terms of the social structures affecting an academic’s work, most academics worked quite independently, and were preoccupied with their own work, their work group and/or research group, and what transpired within their department. Few had a broader perspective that included other departments within a faculty. This meant that library staff generally had to deal with each department separately, and even within a department there was a need to liaise with individual lecturers separately.

So its structures in the department can cause just time consuming kind of problems and the fact that they don’t understand how each other works is a problem. ... So I have to do a lot of research. I just send out emails to all of them but they all tend to just answer individually to me. They never start talking to each other much. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

I guess it is symptomatic of a lot of academics that they can be quite siloed in their thinking about their role .... I do my own research. I do my own teaching .... (Academic–A6)

Academic culture exuded a strong feeling of attachment by academics to their units. This was explained as the consequences of the siloed social structure, the independent nature of doing research and teaching in their own academic role, and the pressure of producing publications each year while having to achieve good ratings in their teaching evaluation. An academic observed:

Academics seem to be all knowing [about their subjects] and are very prescriptive about what they want to achieve and where they want to direct their students to ... they have specific goals and so on. (Academic–Section head–A7)

Once they had established the subject content and teaching approach, any change requested in the curriculum seemed to create unexpected burdens on the academics’ workload, especially when teaching held less academic credibility than research:

I think lecturers, because of the pressures upon them too, they have their own classes, they devise those, they feel much more ownership I think, and they have their own research and there is pressure to publish. I think they think much more of themselves. I mean some of them are very sharing as well but – I think they have a lot more pressure .... (Senior library staff–A28)

There’s a culture of the academic staff, they think they are in complete control of their unit. They don’t like the administration people in their department or their school saying you shouldn’t do this, you should do this. They see I’m the course coordinator, it’s mine, go away, let me alone. (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff-A18)
I think in general, academics tend to be inflexible, you know, once they are fixed on a particular goal, a particular approach, and how they’re going to direct their students and their learning skills, they are like that. If they don’t have enough time to pursue their research, to execute their teaching in the best way, then they tend to probably compromise on the level of collaboration. They might think that we can do this without collaboration because then it’s more time efficient, or we’ll achieve the goal, so collaboration won’t happen in that sense. (Academic–Section head–A7)

Academic culture also varied significantly between faculties. In some disciplines, the level of resistance to change appeared higher than others. Some tenured academic staff were more likely to go against proposed changes or to resist interference from faculty management in their units. These academics seemed to hold invisible power due to their exceptional knowledgeability and reputation in their disciplines. Some of them had been recruited to improve the faculty’s research statistics. Consequently, despite their long-lasting resistance to important changes of the course structure or the new application of educational technologies, faculty leaders had to compromise:

There are problems with academic cultures, of people feeling ownership of a unit or a group of teachers feeling ownership of a unit and being incredibly resistant to change anything about it. Teaching hours, content, order of topics, how it’s taught, how it’s assessed. Everything is a knockdown, drag out fight. Some other faculties might have been in a different position … they’ve had to shed a lot of staff and that was basically because, loss of demand from students, but in [name of the faculty], it’s a bit different. Some of them very senior people and very, very good at what they do. … So they’re not people we want to lose, but they’re very difficult to work with. (Academic–Section head–A9)

On the other hand, library culture was generally perceived to be more collaborative given that working in the library regularly involved teamwork.

I think the library has quite an open sharing, caring, and collaborative culture. (Senior library staff–A28)

Yes. You can’t get any more sharing than being a librarian. (Academic skills adviser–A30)

From the library management perspective, the library structure aimed to facilitate internal collaboration from the top levels down to the grassroots. In this case, the associate university librarian in education and her counterpart librarian in research (see Figure 5-2) shared their leadership across all library liaison teams that they managed. They aimed to make themselves a great collaboration example by sharing their work and being involved in all activities across the areas of education and research. The outcome of their shared directorship was a more informed collaborative environment:

I suppose the library has a strong emphasis on collaboration within our own organization so the way we work together very consciously and all of us, but in particular here because of the shared nature of these two areas [library and academic skills]. We try to see us as one and we work very closely together and not in a territorial kind of way. So it’s not like “don’t get involved in my areas”… in doing that
we were trying to live by example and encourage people to be very collaborative across the whole organization. (Senior library staff–A22)

With library team members, the structure of the library team approach encouraged internal collaboration:

I think it [the structure] works really well because we work together to design activities and have resources and training available so those skills can be developed. Then we also can communicate together and identify if there are any particular issues students are having and work on solving those together and addressing them with the academics together. I think we're more — we're stronger as a team in that sense. We have a stronger effect and impact. So we offer a kind of a 360°—a holistic service and approach. (Liaison librarian–A20)

Collaborating within the team as distinct as well from the faculty because having the meetings and trying out different options and seeing how to improve things, and you are drawing on everyone’s expertise as opposed to just your own skills I guess. (Liaison librarian–A29)

However, since library operations focused on the collective and meetings were used to reach agreement on issues, it could prompt contrasting reactions among academics and academic skills advisers who had a more independent working style and freedom in making decisions:

I guess there are very different cultures. Librarians as people tend to be very detail focussed, very focussed on text and written information, doing things in very established ways. Whereas learning skills advisers tend to be much more outside the box, very flexible, tend to just get on with things. Librarians like to have meetings. So it can be a little bit frustrating sometimes because you just want to do things but the librarians want to have meetings about it and discuss it and approve it and agree. So there can be a lot of meetings. But I think, again, it’s about the relationships you have with people. So, with the librarians here, I have a very good working relationship. (Academic skills adviser–A16)

5.5.2 Inside the box vs. Outside the box

Academics and academic skills advisors tended to view librarians as working in a fairly stable, predictable, structured, and hierarchical environment, governed by clear rules and working conditions, including specified working hours and defined work processes. In contrast, academics were considered to be more individualistic, independent, and flexible; they saw themselves as ‘thinking outside the box’ and ‘getting on with things’ rather than expending enormous effort in seeking consensus.

So it's much harder for them [library staff] to effect change because they have to negotiate for that, whereas we have the freedom to actually say, “I’m going to do things differently. I’m going to work with the library on this.” I don’t have to ask anyone’s permission. It’s like I have permission as an academic. (Academic–A6)

I get the impression – I don’t know if this is true – that the culture in the library is much more structured and a little bit more rigid, but I think that they work really well as a team, and they all
The less structured academic work, which provided considerable autonomy in deciding how and when to work, and promoted flexible working conditions and freedom in decision making, suited the research nature of academic work and helped lecturers’ work efficiency. However, it clearly also encouraged a more independent working style, a ‘solo’ perception of work, and activities that were individualistic rather than collaborative:

… but I don't think that we are encouraged or taught to work within a team. We have to go out and seek that from each other. Like, I’ve approached the learning skills advisers and the librarians to work together, but no one encouraged me to do it. Or no one motivated me to do it. It's not part of academia as such. You work in teams for research, but this concept of working in teams for education is still in its infancy. (Academic–A13)

The structured work culture of the library, on the other hand, constrained collaboration between librarians and academic skills advisers. Cultural differences placed pressure on academic skills advisers following their move to work within the library:

It’s a much more contained structure in the library where things like, you know, the time you start work is important and the time you finish. And you can understand that in a library because it opens and it closes and somebody has to be at the desk. So that’s irrelevant to academic skills advisers but we’re still under that same kind of rule that you start at this time and you finish at that time and you must have a one hour lunch break. It’s alien to academic skills advisers. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

As a consequence, there was a very high turnover amongst those academic skills advisers who could not cope with working ‘inside the box’, and aimed instead to move back to the academic environment:

Our approach is a bit more academic, like it doesn’t matter when you do the work as long as you do it, you know? So some people find that too restrictive. Other people just find, you know, they just come in, do the job and spend a lot of energy looking for an academic position in the faculty they really want to work in. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

The high rate of staff turnover and frustrating experiences among academic skill advisers triggered a change in the library structure and library management strategies. Newly recruited academic skill advisers were advised explicitly that they had a professional job classification, not an academic one. These new staff seemed to have a more diverse disciplinary background, in contrast with the teaching and education qualifications of staff working in the previous structure. However, the academic skills and teaching expertise of the newly recruited staff came from their disciplinary work and research experiences. On the one hand, their expertise in a particular subject or discipline was an advantage when they worked with academics of the
same discipline. On the other hand, these staff were limited in terms of their qualifications relating to teaching English language skills and academic skills to students.

In terms of work structure, library liaison teams gained more flexibility than other library technical staff in how they can approach their work with academics. However, library liaison staff still needed to follow a certain reporting structure, to be at the desk at designated time, and be supervised by the liaison team leader and the branch manager.

Apart from the constraints it imposed, the library culture also worked in a more positive, even fascinating way in facilitating social communication and team work when staff collaborated with faculties. Being responsive, innovative, positive, committed, and adaptable were common perceptions that academics offered about library staff:

*I think the one strength of the library as a whole is that they are very responsive to the academic needs of the faculty … . You get all the information you need, you have – the library’s adapting and changing the way that it works. I think that’s a real asset to the university.* (Academic–Section head–A2)

*The library is reinventing itself. It tries very hard to adapt and adjust to the kind of virtual environment that we are working in now.* (Academic–A4)

*They’re very committed and if they say they’ll do something, it’s always done on time. You never have to follow up. Yes, very good and also, they never express any cynicism about students, so I’m impressed at their professionalism.* (Academic–Section head–A9)

These findings were confirmed through an observation of a group meeting of three academics and an academic skills adviser, which the researcher had an opportunity to attend. It was a pre-meeting to prepare for in-class collaboration activities in which library staff conducted teaching sessions for both undergraduate and postgraduate students about the skills required to do group work. Interestingly, academic staff emerged as very out spoken people discussing unreservedly the challenges that their students faced in working on group projects, and what they expected from their library partners’ involvement. On the other hand, the academic skills adviser presented as more perceptive, calming influence concerns about the students’ weaknesses that the academic team put forward in the meeting. He listened attentively and took notes quietly throughout the meeting, although the follow-up interview with him gave an impression that he was very experienced and confident about what he was going to do in the class. As expected, follow-up interviews with the participating academics recorded excellent feedback about how the library staff conducted and managed the training in such dynamic classes, as well as how all of their requests in the pre-meeting were addressed.
Main insights 5.5:

Differences in work culture between academics and librarians could create frustrating experiences. Academic culture emphasises a more independent working style and individualistic focus. Academics generally had a strong feeling of ownership of the subject. They had more freedom in decision making and flexibility in terms of time and space to work. Some tenured academics demonstrated considerable resistance to change. Some academics felt they had higher status than professional staff.

Library culture was perceived as more collaborative and responsive, but more structured and detail-focused, emphasising the value of collective decisions and teamwork. However, with academics skills advisers who worked in the library liaison team, library culture was seen as restrictive and clashed with the nature of their academic work. Success in collaboration was again confirmed as strongly depending on the characteristics of the individuals and the personal relationships between participants.

5.6 Mediating roles of technology on collaboration practice

Along with the impacts of power asymmetries and work culture differences, the influence of technology on collaboration was an important factor that mediated the interactions of academics and library staff. For data analysis, the duality of technology theory of Orlikowski (1992a) proved a useful framework for understanding the role of technology in the organization, given its focus on interactions among technology, people, and institutional structure in social practices.

This section presents an investigation of the use of current technologies, their enabling and constraining aspects as well as the influence of institutional structure on the use of technology in collaboration. Institutional contexts, the capability of collaborators, and the academic and professional divide are further analysed to gain insights.

5.6.1 Use of technologies in collaboration

Different types of technologies were used for communication and collaboration among library staff and academics. The level of use differed between staff members, groups, faculties, and campuses, and was affected by the distance between collaborators and the degree of collaboration. The types and extent of technology varied from a simple use of emails or Google applications for teamwork, to a “sharing space” in a learning management system, and the advanced application of technology to create interactive materials and to explore new opportunities for collaboration.

Email was mentioned as the communication technology used more extensively than any other collaborative application. It seemed to be the primary means of online communication for various purposes, and the preferred tool for contact between academics and library staff.
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I use Moodle for my own teaching, Google Docs for my own work, social technologies for my research but to work with librarians, I only use email to communicate with them, exchange information, ask queries, get a reply or setting meeting times, setting appointments … . (Academic–Section head–A7)

Email was used for exchanging course-related materials and resources that met students’ interests:

I certainly provided them with copies of our unit guides. I think what they have done is sent us the presentations and we’ve uploaded [them]. (Academic–Section head–A15)

An academic skills advisor described their interaction over email:

So he would just share his unit guide with me and basically leave it up to me and my librarian colleague … And just email backwards and forwards until we’re happy and do it that way. (Academic skills adviser–A16)

A few years ago, the university migrated its email system to Gmail. The migration made other Google applications more popular among academics and library staff. Google Docs seemed a very helpful tool for sharing documents among staff and supporting collaborative work on the same documents. For example, the library ran a series of marking and assessment rubrics workshops among library staff and academic staff, then shared the rubrics on Google Docs for input from everyone, either by commenting, writing, or editing. In some faculties, Google Docs had provided a shared space in which academics and library staff work together to produce important guidelines and style manuals for students. Likewise, Google Calendar has become more popular in sharing calendars and making appointments among library staff and with academics. Google Drive and Dropbox were mentioned as useful virtual storage to share big files with students and library staff. Google Drive replaced a collaborative shared-space called Sakai, which some library staff used to work together on a poster for a conference.

Academics and library staff tended to use Google applications to work collaboratively with their students and colleagues in the same department. Some academics said that they mainly used Google sites to work with their students, while library staff reported that they used this application only within their library team. In other projects, Google Hangouts and video conferencing tools were used more for library team meetings, staff recruitment, and professional development across the regional and international library campuses, rather than with academic staff.

Along with the popular use of Google applications, social technologies have been a common phenomenon around the university’s communities. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were being used by the library and three out of the six selected faculties. These applications were widely used for updating news, events, or topics of interest to staff and students. The library sometimes advertised library classes on Facebook and "very quickly it was booked out, within a
day”, as noted by Liaison librarian–A29. YouTube and Twitter were also reported to be heavily used, along with screen recordings, to demonstrate visually activities and answers to students’ questions:

… in lectures … [we] use Twitter a lot, so when students send a tweet with a particular hash tag, it appears on the bottom of the slides, and I can use Twitter … if they tweet in a particular way, we can get them to respond to say a quiz, and have a bar chart of their responses in real time … If a student asks a question … you can answer questions by showing them rather than it’s hard to explain, so I’ll record me doing it and I’ll put that up on a website and then that student gets the answer, but all students get the answer … And [I] do lots of videos in my lectures. (Academic–A10)

Likewise, the library has taken advantage of blogs, RSS feeds, and wiki technologies to provide students with multiple channels of information about the library and the university in general. The library guides have been used as wikis for students of all faculties. This application has supported library staff in sharing guides and resources for skills development in English language, communication, general assessment tasks, and specific subjects among students and interested staff. The success of the library guide was remarked on by a group of library staff, as it was “the most frequently hit and used one” and “that’s got the [faculty] blog and the [faculty] tweets on it” (Liaison librarian–A29).

Another key technology that academics and library staff utilised was the Moodle learning management system. Moodle provided primary online learning functions, such as lecture materials, assignment submission, grading, discussion forums, instant messaging, calendars, and other learning activities. This online system was central to all the teaching and learning activities system; thus it was seen as a desired space where library staff could work with academics for outreach to all students:

The important thing is academics work on Moodle. One of the areas that we now spend a lot of time developing resources for [is] Moodle. (Senior library staff–A21)

… access to the technologies that the academics have access to be equal kind of partners; on equal footing and to be talking the same language as they are. Whether that means having the same kind of problems that they have because we’re using the same technologies, but I think it’s important too. (Liaison librarian–A20)

The strategic focus on online interaction had encouraged library staff to focus effort on creating rich sources of electronic resources to share with academics. Some library staff used Captivate software to create an online module that academics can actively use or link to. Other library staff started to develop their own Moodle sites. By doing that, they could enrol interested students, academics, and faculty staff in a particular unit in which learning resources were developed and tailored for specific skills development and targeted groups. Furthermore, they had the full administrative right to manage the site as academics do in their Moodle units:
I am creating a program for students who are failing units. I thought a Moodle unit might be a good way to be able to talk to them as a group and also lecturers … they can have input too. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

That is where we will have total ownership of those spaces, within Moodle. (Academic skills adviser–Sessional academic staff–A25)

Library staff had also taken advantage of the institutional repository tools that helped identify opportunities for new collaborative initiatives. For instance, they had access to the University business intelligence system, which stored important information about cohorts, international students, social inclusion, and the pass or failure rates in all units. As a consequence, library staff were able to develop classes and resources that targeted specific groups of students who needed learning support for specific skills or resources. This facilitated conversation with academics about collaborative activities for particular groups of students.

The other repository system in the library, Equella, was significant for internal collaboration and knowledge sharing. Library staff deposited the teaching resources that they had developed into this common space to share with others, and they could benefit from the contributions of other colleagues to the repository:

So if I was doing a whole new class on something, I could look in Equella and see if someone else had done it, or a similar [presentation]. Then I could download that, modify … . So it saves you having to recreate everything from scratch all the time. (Liaison librarian–A26)

5.6.2 Mediating roles of technology on collaboration

The increasing use of technology in collaboration between academics and library staff had transformed their interactions and the nature of their work. The domain of collaborative activities had shifted radically from physical locations to online space. Today, instead of going to the library and searching for materials, academics mostly accessed and used library resources in their own places.

Personal insight:

As part of the researcher’s experience working at the information desk of the case study library, she saw very few academics coming to talk with library staff. Interaction usually occurred when there were issues with library facilities or when they needed library help in a specific job. This could be explained by the application of technology in almost all the areas of the library resources and services. The library also employed self-service borrowing systems which allowed students and staff to check out the books they wanted by themselves. And certainly, most of the more recent of the library resources were available online or could be requested online via the library websites or by telephone and email.
The digital shift had, however, created new opportunities for collaborative activities in a virtual environment. Library staff hence focused on developing digital course-related resources and moving towards the same online work platform with academics:

… we also develop resources for research strategies and assessment tasks which is their essay, so it is quite specific. I mean put them into that blog, and if there are other opportunities in other units, we certainly work with academics on that … we try to work on that way … and now on Moodle. (Senior library staff–A21)

In such a large university, acknowledging and keeping track of what people were doing in other disciplines was challenging. By working together in the same platform, the Moodle learning management system, both academics and librarians had developed a clear idea of their partners’ expertise and how others could contribute to achieving their mutual goals.

We have to get approval from the academics to load resources for them and we can demonstrate for them the value that we do and value to students. It is quite successful. (Senior library staff–A21)

Consequently, better understanding about their partners’ expertise has led to collaborative follow-up actions or new initiatives.

… at the moment more of the work is sort of getting done through the embedded programs and the work on assessment tools and making skill development explicit across units … . Most of the value is coming out of that. (Academic skills adviser–A26)

The complementary role of technology in collaboration was highlighted in the way it supported library staff and their academic partners in sharing teaching-related resources and transferring knowledge. Since library staff experienced a challenge in sharing resources with their international campus libraries, which operate across a variety of time zones, a Moodle site was set up where staff in all campuses could upload resources. By accessing the site, the learning skills manager knew what units other staff were working on, so she could connect local staff with overseas staff and suggest they work in partnership to share their knowledge and resources of similar units. This facilitated collaboration, not only by enhancing the team knowledge in those units, but also by helping distant peer learning and staff development. From the leadership management perspective, technology was not only an agent of change by bringing in new ways of doing work, but also a medium for implementing such change through the tools used for managing and sharing resources.

It could be a good way of changing the environment too. Like our Equella repository example, that was a useful way of trying to get more sharing, whereas, without the tool – without the technology – we probably couldn’t have done more than we were already doing by just trying to encourage people. (Senior library staff–A22)
An academic stream leader observed:

*Yes, I actually use Dropbox to share [with library staff] some videos that we show to students in teaching.*

(Academic–A13)

Apart from the advantageous impact of technology on collaboration, the widespread use of online library resources and online services had provided certain constraints on building and nurturing the relationship between academics and librarians. The seamless access to library resources and the convenience of online interaction offered fewer opportunities for face-to-face communication than previously. An academic who had worked for the university for nearly 15 years commented:

*So over my time here, my contact with the library staff has got less, but my interaction with the library electronically, has increased because there’s a lot more available electronically with the library, plus you can search it from your desk so you don’t have to walk half way across the campus, so when it’s raining or whatever, you can sit in your office and do it.*

(Academic–A8)

Consequently, a lack of mutual understanding about the work of the partners and the possible contributions that they could make to the partnership was well recognised throughout the interviews with academics. Given the extensive use of the digital library, the lower levels of face-to-face interaction could be a reason why some academics still kept an old-fashioned perception of the role of the librarians as traditional custodians of books. A course administrator noted the difficulties for busy academics in keeping up-to-date with the constant change within the other communities in the university. She highlighted the importance of direct interaction for the outcome of collaboration:

*But for the personal touch to development of that relationship, you need to meet people. I’m a big believer in meeting people or telephone, especially with meeting, things happen faster.*

(Course administrator–A3)

Another important constraint of technology upon collaboration was noted in the separation of the library system (and other related systems) from the key teaching platform of the university, the Moodle learning management system. There were no link between the two systems, so as to facilitate collaboration in related teaching and learning support activities that both communities acted on. For example, library staff were responsible for the lecture recording system, course-related academic skills resources, and the reading list of core materials. These resources were managed in different systems, even though they were closely related to the teaching work of academics in the Moodle learning management system. However, the divide between the systems that academics and library staff worked on formed an invisible boundary between these two communities. One academic noted:

*Moodle is the key system and I think everything else needs to be able to be integrated, that it should always be clearly–easy, clear pathways to integrate into that. So I think the fact that the library and the Moodle staff, were sort of separate, I think is a problem.*

(Academic–A6)
The issues raised by inadequate system integration that constrained collaborative activities have important implications for studying the impacts of the institutional conditions and consequences of using technologies in collaboration.

5.6.3 Institutional conditions and consequences of interaction with technology in collaboration

Institutional structure and operational policies have been central to how university staff interact with the technology provided. The merger of the academic advisers unit with the library aimed at a more collaborative structure for academic practice within the university. However, communication about the structural change and the role of the academic skills advisors in helping students with learning and research skills was not well known among many academics.

No, I think for many, they're just not aware of it. And I guess it's symptomatic of a lot of academics that they can be quite siloed in their thinking about their role. (Academic–A6)

The choice of whether or not to provide default access for library staff to the Moodle learning management system offered a very good example of how rules and structure influenced the use of technology. When the university implemented Moodle, there was an interesting discussion as to whether library staff would be automatically included in all of the Moodle units. Library managers reflected on the experience of not having automatic access into the previous learning management system. This had caused challenges for library staff, who had to build good relationships with academics in order to get their permission to access the online unit. When addressing the possibility of automatic access in the new learning management system, they considered the challenge of being enrolled in thousands of units where they might not be able to work as effectively as expected across all of them. Eventually, they decided not to seek automatic access to Moodle, because they would have more flexibility about what activities they were involved in and how they could work with academics. The relationship with academics was considered to be the most important starting point.

In fact, getting access to Moodle, as the central place of teaching and learning activities, was found essential among library staff who worked directly collaboratively with academics. In order to help students effectively in developing learning and research skills for a specific assessment task, they expected to see the unit guide, the assignment, and any kind of learning resources that students were being shown on Moodle. Nevertheless, the need to give library staff access to Moodle was not well recognised among academics.

It can be challenging sometimes because lecturers might ask, “Well, why do you need access to Moodle?” (Liaison librarian–A20)

They just don’t understand that. They think that I can run a workshop on writing this assignment without really seeing much about the assignment itself … so I always have to request access to Moodle … . So it’s not in their minds to do that even though I’m collaborating in the unit. (Academic skills adviser–A17)
Academics, on the other hand, assumed that their library partners would give students resources and learning skills in general rather than course-specific support. Two academics who had been working with library staff for years responded:

*I think the library staff could have a role there, but I don’t personally know what they’re doing in that space.* (Academic–Section head–A2)

*They can request having this access but they didn’t need it. Instead they have their own website, they have their own Moodle site and my students can download material from their website.* (Academic–A4)

Many academics gave library staff access to their Moodle site upon request, but “not routinely; it’s not something that I would typically do,” said Academic–A10.

Since academics and library staff worked within separate systems, there were issues related to the lack of consistency in operating procedures, which caused an unexpected duplication of work. Library staff were responsible for the lecture recording system, which closely relates to the work of academics in the learning management system. A problem occurred when the new version of the lecture recording system had a tool in which students could comment about the lecture and receive feedback from the lecturers. However, Moodle also had a discussion forum tool where students had communicated with lecturers on all course-related issues for years. The overlapping use of discussion tools on both the learning management system and on the lecture recording system created frustration among academics:

*I think that’s a structural problem in the university because the LMS people have made decisions that the library people aren’t aware of and vice versa.* (Academic–A6)

The separation of systems had apparently created misunderstanding and unnecessary extra work for academic staff in responding to lecture-related comments on the two separate platforms. This example demonstrates the consequences of interaction with technology ultimately producing unexpected outcomes. Hence, greater coordination across these isolated systems towards seamless integration into the main learning management system is critical. It would also help minimise negative influences of technology on the development of collaborative relationships between academics and library staff.
Main insights 5.6:

The domain of collaborative activities had shifted radically from physical locations to online space. The extensive use of the digital library, however, has offered fewer opportunities for face-to-face communication, which are important earlier in building new relationships and achieving high-end collaboration.

Levels of technology use for collaborative activities differed between staff members, groups, faculties and campuses, and was affected by the distance between collaborators, personal interest, and the degree of collaboration.

Library staff and academics mostly worked in separate technology platforms, which could cause miscommunication and lack of understandings about each other’s work.

The siloed organisational structures of the library and faculties have not helped to increase the mediating role of technology in enhancing collaboration, and instead widen the academic-professional divide. Hence, greater coordination across the isolated systems towards seamless integration of the library management and learning management system is critical.

5.7 ‘Time–space’: temporal and spatial dimensions of collaborative partnerships

Several important findings relate to the temporal dimension of collaborative partnerships. The most notable, albeit obvious one, is that it takes time for collaborative relationships to develop. Effective collaboration does not simply happen by management edict but instead through the development of personal understanding and respect for each other’s knowledge, skills, and expertise that is built up between partners over time. As Giddens (1979) has noted: “any patterns of interaction that exist are situated in time” (p. 202).

The story of the evolving relationship between librarians and academic skills advisers, after the academic skills advisers were incorporated into the library division, illustrates how a working partnership needs time to develop. From initial opposition and tension, the two professional groups have been increasingly working together in effective collaborative partnerships, offering faculties much better integrated academic support than previously, through melding training in information and research skills with training in communication skills and learning skills.

… because academic skills advisers and librarians have complementary skills … we get maximum benefit when we work as a team. Then we can engage more completely with academic staff. [We] definitely [work as] a team … of librarians and academic skills advisers, which is not only [cross-disciplinary] but cross-campus as well. So we need to communicate well between ourselves to be able to effectively work with academics, who might be within a particular school, but located at a [different] campus … . Slowly, by working together, you know, that can be overcome and once the librarians sort of get to know us more, they feel more comfortable asking, you know, how do you think I could teach
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... this? Whereas in the earlier days, I think that they felt at a disadvantage because they didn’t know much about teaching. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

The research collected data concerning some very successful long-term partnerships between the library and faculties that was the culmination of relationship-building over decades. In one faculty, the close relationship with the library meant that library staff (librarians and academic skills advisers), as non-involved externals, were able to act as a circuit-breaker in the resolution of academic staff conflict over organisational changes such as restructuring courses or implementing new educational technologies. In this faculty, the relationship with library staff was described in the following terms:

Library staff are a positive influence on our culture … . [In meetings] they always inject a positive note into discussions, particularly when things are starting to become very negative. They will come in, … in a very non-emotional way and they acknowledge the concerns. Then, they come up with ideas as to how we could address that, … help [us] think around problems, … [suggest] well, here’s a way that we might deal with this or … , why don’t we think about this idea. They’ve got it at their fingertips … I don’t have the same expertise they do … . (Academic–Section head–A9)

Policies about collaboration may be crafted by university leaders, but how collaboration actually evolves is much more unstructured. There were no established structures or rules for setting up a collaborative partnership. The research found very different patterns of collaboration both between library staff and academics across faculties and with different academics in one faculty. Each partnership tended to evolve at the grassroots level, and in quite different ways. For instance, in one faculty there was a structured program for skills development for new students, but:

… there’s not so much at second and third year, it’s very ad-hoc, it’s not planned. The Associate Dean Education wants to see the development of skills planned, … building up through the different levels, but it never happens because so many of the lecturers say “No, no we don’t have time”. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

This perceived lack of time had multiple dimensions. One was the ‘over-crowded curriculum’ phenomenon. While academics want their students to have good communication and teamwork skills:

… they don’t want to give up any of their class time because of [their discipline] content. They say “My lecture schedule is full. I don’t have time”. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

It’s mostly lack of time. I probably could have made use of the library. I’m not sure. I haven’t, this semester I haven’t had time to look at what services I could use from the library, and actually the number of units I was looking after I didn’t really have time to do anything but teach. (Academic–A14)

Another dimension was the widespread impression amongst academics that only research achievement was valued by the university:
... academic staff and library staff don’t have much to do with each other, unless they happen to be co-teaching in a unit. You know, they just go on doing what they’ve been doing. They don’t want to hear that there’s another way, if it involves any time commitment by them. They don’t want to commit the time. The perception of academic staff … is that only research matters, that any additional time spent on teaching will not be acknowledged and would be, in effect, in your own time. (Academic–Section head–A9)

With mounting workloads, many academics were unprepared to take on any additional tasks and resisted collaboration attempts. However, other academics did see the value in collaboration with the library.

In terms of the spatial dimension, “the positioning of the body in space in social interaction’ through face-to-face encounters is fundamentally important’ (Giddens, 1979, p. 203). In general, collaborative partnerships developed more naturally when participants knew each other well and interacted regularly face-to-face. This was particularly noticeable on small campuses, where library staff knew most academics across the local faculties. It also was evident within one faculty on a large campus where the faculty library was physically located in a very central position for academic staff access. In essence, as two participants observed, effective collaboration:

… is about the relationships you have with people … with the librarians here, I have very good working relationships. (Academic skills adviser–A16)

Being a smaller campus I guess I’m unique in that I cover most of the faculties. So at the larger campuses you will have a learning skills adviser perhaps on one faculty team, maybe two, so that they focus on just those faculties and those units. At the smaller campuses, because again, I’m the only person here, I’m the only person in [name of the campus], you end up working across all of them. … If I was part of a bigger team … obviously we’d need to coordinate how we approach things. (Academic skills adviser–A27)

One challenge involved building relationships with a faculty dispersed across several campuses. The library had developed matrix team structures and ways of working designed to ensure consistency of offerings across campuses:

We do have that very close working relationship across the campuses and I think that’s a strength of the library. We do have a representation across the campuses and we do actually have the capacity to offer our services very consistently across the campuses. … I think that could probably be an advantage not just for us, the library, but also for students as well because, [wherever] you enrol, you still actually get similar services from the library and that kind of a consistency and continuity is something we are proud of. (Senior library staff–A23)

But time and space are inseparable elements in the constitution of collaboration relationships. There were both opportunities and challenges to library staff who needed to work across
different campuses in a changeable schedule. One academic skills adviser who had a sole responsibility in a small campus claimed:

"Every semester I have to look at the timetable because I teach into quite a few core units, it’s a challenge to see when they run. So my days each semester tend to be different. So this semester, I’m [name of the campus] Monday, Tuesday, Friday and I’m at [name of other campus] Wednesday, Thursday, but each year it sort of changes around because I see when the core units are and then I sort of do my days to cover what I need to cover down there and what I need to cover up here and usually I can’t fit everything. … So sometimes I can’t run all the programs and that’s a real challenge because you work so hard building that relationship, getting the program up to here where you are—throughout the—I mean some of the units I teach five of the weeks … that’s more than a third of the actual content of the unit I actually teach … If I wasn’t on the campus on that day I mean what do I say to the academic? “Sorry, I’m not going to be here for those five weeks.” They all of a sudden then have five weeks when they’ve got no class to teach. So that’s a challenge and that’s something I just have to manage all the time." (Academic skills adviser—A27)

Nevertheless, working in close proximity to others, or interacting in common spaces, did increase the likelihood of developing personal working relationships that seem critical for effective collaborative partnerships. One academic skills adviser reflected:

"I guess I’m fortunate in that across the campuses I work, I’ve been here for sort of four or five years, so I’ve established a reputation. I’ve developed credibility. So there is that respect there. So even if it’s an academic I’m not familiar with, or that we don’t know each other, they will have heard of me and because I’ve got a strong relationship with their peers. … The other advantage of being in a smaller campus is that the staff are a lot more accessible. There are much less staff. It’s more, I suppose, that sense of community. Like— I know most of the staff. We know each other by— so it’s quite easy to walk up and have a chat to someone." (Academic skills adviser—A27)

Interaction between library staff and academics was often linked to particular times within the academic calendar, most typically during orientation week when a new cohort of students was introduced to the library and its information skills and learning skills training. These arrangements sometimes continued into the first year of a course, as one academic outlined:

"Certainly in the department there are lecturers who do work with library staff. I don’t think it’s everybody. At first year there are some units where the library staff are involved as well, because first year is where you want to establish good habits, good learning habits and good assignment writing habits." (Academic—Section head—A2)

Sustaining those links over time and throughout the duration of a course was much more challenging, and collaborative ventures tended to be more ad hoc in subsequent years of a course. Much of this was due to claims of a ‘lack of time’ from academics. Also, there were distinctions in terms of credibility and role structures between the two communities. The bureaucratic and complex institutional structure might have exacerbated the academic-professional divide. As mentioned, academics seemed to have more freedom than library staff
to work in the way they wanted and at the time they wanted, while the hierarchical structure of the library and certain rules limited the flexibility of the work choices of library staff.

… it’s [a] much more contained structure in the library where things like, you know, the time you start work is important and the time you finish. (Academic skills adviser–A17)

Main insights 5.7:

Effective collaboration does not simply happen by management edict but through the development of personal understanding and respect for each other’s knowledge, skills and expertise that is built up between partners over time.

Time and space are inseparable dimensions of the collaborative relationship. Time recursively interacted with structure to influence how participants made decisions in allocating their time for collaboration, while the proximity of work space produced opportunities for achieving high-end collaboration.

5.8 Individual dimensions

Along with a distinctive work culture, there was evidence that the success of a collaborative venture was strongly influenced by the individual characteristics of participants and their personal views about collaboration. Interactions at an individual level helped them know how to work with each other:

I think it really goes back to building a relationship at a personal level. You can't just sort of start off a research collaboration without getting to know the person. I think that's really how it works with the library. (Academic–Section head–A2)

I have a fairly strong personal, professional and collaborative relationship with library staff, and it’s built up over the last two years when they have come in and been quite actively involved in the two practice units. (Academic–Section head–A15)

Working in a small campus or in a close proximity, participants had more opportunities to build personal relationships than in a large campus. Either interacting in social spaces or having informal conversations on a walk were significant in initiating or cultivating working relationships:

It’s quite a small campus, I can go to yoga and I will see three different academics and two professional staff from within the faculties… . You can walk across and see people you know and talk to people on the way. Then they’ll introduce you to someone. So there’s that sort of informal communication. (Academic skills adviser–A16)

To achieve a positive collaborative relationship, well-developed interpersonal and communication skills were crucial, as were personalities that meshed well. In one faculty
where there was highly developed collaboration with the library, personality factors were alluded to:

[Regarding] the temperaments and personalities of the library staff, we’ve been very, very lucky, with [several named staff members]. I mean they’re all really, really nice people. They’re quietly spoken, they’re calm and unexcitable, they’re problem-solving people, they’re articulate, so that’s one thing. They never react to what people say. They always take a problem-solving approach and we’ve just been lucky, I think. Maybe the library’s doing a very good job of choosing people, but you could see that it could be different, if you had a more difficult personality . . . . (Academic—Section head—A9)

Interestingly, the personality of participants was closely related to their work culture. Academic culture was individual and direct, and academics’ personal characteristics were more diverse. Library culture was more collaborative, and library staff tended to be flexible and able to adjust to unexpected situations. For example, they were prepared to take on jobs outside their scope of practice, in order to make collaboration happen:

They are a very varied group of people. They are very individual and some of them are quite different to work with to others. . . . We are often asked to do things that technically we might think well, that doesn’t really fall within our realm but I think to be able to work with them more effectively it doesn’t hurt to do some things sometimes that it’s not really our responsibility, as long as I guess it doesn’t get pushed on us forever too much. (Senior library staff—A28)

In relation to the diverse personalities of individuals, their differences in educational backgrounds influenced their personal perceptions of collaboration:

The management people and the marketing people are very interested in what we’re doing. The accounting people are a little bit interested. The business statistics people say what could you help us do? They don’t think we can do anything. (Liaison librarian—Sessional academic staff—A18)

Another important aspect in building a collaborative relationship was an element of trust. Participants were willing to share their knowledge and resources once they were confident that their partners maintained their professional integrity.

Some people at the beginning, expressed a lack of trust in others to use the shared resources appropriately. . . . They think people just take it and go and use it like it’s theirs. (Senior library staff—A22)

Trust became an essential condition for collaboration when there were risks of professional conflicts between academics skills advisers and librarians:

I think what underpins that was trust. If the colleagues could trust each other they work well together. When I talk about trust, I mean professional trust because the librarians felt that the academic skills advisers were really taking over and changing librarianship forever. And the academics skills advisers felt that they would have been compromised as they have to work in the library environment. (Senior library staff—A21)
There was a strong connection of time, effort, capacity and personality with building trust.
Trust could be established and built over time with expertise, reliability and credibility.

So what’s happening is I’m getting more of an opportunity to do this skill development but it’s based on trust, the recognition that there is some value in what I do. . . . It’s at a point where they trust me with the content. So I will say, “Do you want to have a look through?” and they go “No I am sure it’s fine”. (Academic skills adviser–A27)

Building trust appeared to be more challenging in a multi-professional cultural environment.
The merger of the academic skills and language teaching unit with the library led to two groups – academic skills advisers and librarians working together in library liaison teams. At the beginning, when there was a lack of understanding about each other’s work culture, both groups displayed a low level of trust:

It is very interesting from my perspective that the academic skills advisers who often have the teaching background were much more out-spoken and they would put their points of view across quite loud, and then we have librarians who are very reserved would not say anything in front of everyone, but they would go to their supervisors and discuss . . . . But today there is a lot more trust in each other collegially. (Senior library staff–A21)

To support a collegial work environment, the library management developed strategies that supported library staff in building trusted relationships. A good example was found in the level of freedom at work they offered to both library liaison staff and academic skills advisers:

We have quite a level of individual autonomy for people who are in those professional roles so it is the element of our trust and confidence in those people. (Senior library staff–A22)

Main insights 5.8:

Individual characteristics such as personal relationships, personality and trust were essential features that influenced the initiation and development of a collaborative relationship.

- Personal relationships formed a crucial basis for participants’ intentions and involvement in collaboration. They were grounded on social interactions, conversations in physical or digital space, and over time.

- Personality, personal perceptions, interpersonal and communication skills were all necessary elements of a positive collaborative relationship. These features interconnected with the work culture of participants and their educational background.

- Trust was important in building and maintaining a collaborative relationship. This element could be established and mutually built overtime with participants’ expertise, effort and credibility. Building trust was more difficult in an organisation that contained multiple professional cultures, but improved through working together in a collegial environment.
5.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined findings of the case study at the Australian university. Collaboration in this university varied by individuals, faculties, libraries, and campuses. Successful collaboration occurred when participants developed a high level of professional and personal relationships. The library liaison team model, which consisted of liaison librarians and academic skills advisers, enabled effective collaboration with academics in teaching across the disciplines. However, the university’s organisational structure did not explicitly encourage faculties and the library to work collaboratively.

The findings were discussed at four levels: social system, organisation, profession, and individual. Seven themes could be identified as emergent: fundamental changes in library-faculty collaboration structure; power imbalance and boundaries between academics, academic skills advisers and librarians; differences in work culture and their consequences; the importance of time and space to collaboration contexts and relationship building; the interplay of structure and technology in changing collaboration domains and communication; and the importance of personal relationships and individual characteristics for the success of collaboration.

The findings of the Australian case study provided an in-depth understanding of the nature of the collaborative relationships between academics and library staff, contextual factors, and individual characteristics in the social, educational and cultural contexts of Australia.

From a theoretical perspective, Giddens’ theory of structuration and Orlikowski’s theory of the duality of technology enabled the discovery of the interplay of structure and technology on collaboration practice. The theories were useful for examining the influencing factors of collaboration from the structural, social, organisational, technological, cultural and professional perspectives. However, the theories did not seem to support the elucidation of personal features that are crucial for the initiation and development of a collaborative relationship (see details in the final theory discussion at sections 7.6, 8.1.3 and 8.3.3).

The next chapter presents findings of collaboration at the Vietnamese university.
6 Vietnamese case findings

This chapter reports the main findings of factors influencing collaboration at the Vietnamese university (Figure 6-1).

Figure 6-1: Structure of the Vietnamese case findings
Figure 6-1 is a coding map tree that illustrates the seven main themes emerged from the analysis of Vietnamese data, i.e., Governance, Culture, Power, Contexts, Technology, Personal Dimensions, and Time and Space and their sub-themes at detailed levels of coding. The overarching themes were similar to the Australian case findings. However, there were differences in some sub-themes denoting contextual factors particular to the Vietnamese organisation, notably, structure in the Governance categories; influences of leaders’ culture in the Culture category; and influence of culture, and social interaction in the Technology category. Detailed comparisons of these themes across the two case studies are presented in Chapter 7.

The findings of the Vietnamese case study focus on the characteristics and influences of a state university’s social structure, particularly the hierarchical system and power distribution, social and cultural norms, transformative impact of technology, the importance of time and space, and personal dimensions. These structures influenced and were influenced by participants’ interactions during their practice of collaboration. The two-way direction arrows were used to reflect the structure–practice interplay.

Each section of this chapter explores one theme to illuminate particular factors and their relationship to others. There is sometimes no clear-cut distinction between sub-themes, since social, structural, cultural and personal elements are interrelated and influence each other. As with the Australian case, all themes are presented in sections that correspond to each of the main influencing factors, supported by direct quotations of interviewees’. Each section has the same sub-number as the Australian case. Vietnamese participants have been labelled with their role title and a running number with V before it (for Vietnam); in the same way that Australian participants have A before the number. Each section concludes with the elaboration of relevant insights that are presented in a shaded box.

6.1 Overview of the broader social system

The Vietnamese university is a long established and prestigious multidisciplinary educational institution. It is a leading university in the arena of international collaboration for teaching, with links to more than 30 universities worldwide. The university has traditionally placed greater emphasis on teaching as opposed to research, but that is gradually changing. This study was conducted at five of the institution’s ten faculties, a university library, and a faculty’s library located in the university.

From a broader view, collaboration between academics and library staff has significantly improved in recent years. There have been many efforts by librarians to improve collaborative relationships, generating in turn an increasing interest from academics. The library has shifted its partnership focus from traditional collection development activities to the provision of information literacy training and research support for academics and students. This transition has changed the nature and the level of their relationship as well as their scope of practice. The number of successful collaborations with faculties has increased.

The level of collaboration varied significantly across academics, faculties and libraries, however. In some faculties, academics showed a strong interest in working with library staff to
integrate and teach information and research skills in the curriculum. Their collaboration underlined the exceptional effort, mutual contribution, knowledge sharing and respect for each other’s expertise and professionalism. They were willing to embark on new collaborative initiatives to support teaching and research activities for students or improve the current skills development programs. The success of these collaboration instances was mostly based on the personal relationship of library staff with academics. Library collaboration was not widely known in the university. The collaboration process has been constrained by various structural elements of the social system, i.e., organisational management, cultural differences and personal characteristics of the partners. Such structures have changed over time, offering challenges and opportunities for both groups to develop their relationship. This section discusses the enabling and constraining effects of the governance structure of the university.

Within the university structure, senior management committees were responsible for high level decision-making, strategic development, academic and administration affairs. Members of these committees included the president, vice-presidents, faculty leaders and heads of administrative units. Although the senior library management staff had equal positions with faculty leaders in the governance structure of the university, they were not appointed as representative members of these committees. Likewise, the library had no representatives on any faculty board. The absence of librarian representatives throughout the university committees indicated a lack of recognition of library roles in education and the research mission of the university.

Sadly, the library’s role is blurred and unrecognised by any academic committees. No one knows that we could contribute to the enhancement of student learning and research. (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V1)

The structure of the university governance was very bureaucratic, with a centralised management approach common to many state universities in Vietnam. In this system, the university leaders wield considerable power over subordinate divisions such as faculties and the library. The involvement of faculty leaders and the university librarian in senior decision-making processes was modest. The university required that drawn-out procedures and application processes for faculties and libraries be followed in order to have their development plan or actions approved. The approval process normally required extra work such as re-planning costs, reduction in the amount of purchases, or obtaining further support from other administrative departments, particularly with programs or actions requiring large financial support. In other words, both faculties and the library had a low level of autonomy in decision-making and little financial independence.

An example of the influence of governance systems on collaboration was articulated by a senior library staff member discussing library acquisition activities. The library had been allocated an annual acquisition budget for purchasing library materials for the university, but they were not given sufficient autonomy to use those funds. Various procedures and sometimes extra activities were needed to complete before purchases were approved. For instance, along with the provision of signed forms by all the Deans to confirm their faculty’s needs and relevance of the material to specific subjects, librarians could be asked to seek
support from other academic and administrative divisions such as the Training department, the Research Management department and Finance division. Librarians were then required to work with the chief of the Finance division to confirm the availability of the library budget. Consequently, there were times when librarians failed to fulfil the acquisition orders either due to the unavailability of the budget, or concerns over the effective use of previously purchased materials. Failing to supply the requested resources meant librarians lost opportunities to maintain their essential role in providing materials to support the educational and research activities of faculties. The librarians also lost their prestige with faculties who had spent time working with them to meet the acquisition procedures.

Every time we made a purchasing order, we needed to ask faculties to check the relevance of the materials with the courses. They spent a lot of time to help us checking the catalogues. And you know faculties are so busy. So when the order was rejected, we found it really hard to explain to them. The next time, when we asked them to check new lists of materials for the next semester, they said “No, my faculty doesn’t need any materials” or “Leave them to us” but they never responded . . . . We lost their respect. (Senior library staff–Sessional academic staff–V7)

Like the library, faculties also had little autonomy in decision-making under this centralised management structure. Budget constraint and hierarchical systems constrained their day-to-day practice, since they needed to follow drawn-out procedures to gain permission to spend funding. Over time, after experiencing the rejection of various requests, faculties lost their motivation to make changes. As a result, resistance to change became the norm in faculties, particularly among senior academics who had extensive experience working under the structure.

It is a long process to get the things you need. I used to propose buying important resources or purchasing facilities for more faculty activities to the Dean. But he usually said “The university will not approve. There’s no point. The answer will be No.” If I said “please try again, they are the things we really need”, he would reply “I have, but nothing would happen. It is a tiring process. I don’t want to lose face again.” (Academic–V10)

Another important budget-related challenge for state universities in Vietnam was the low income of both academics and library staff. Academic staff often had to take extra jobs outside the university to make ends meet. Many of them worked for coaching colleges or taught in-service classes at other universities. Others might work as part-time interpreters or software developers for IT companies.

They can’t afford it with their current income. After lecture time, they have to run to work for another organisation. There is no time for faculty activities or collaboration with anyone. (Academic–Section head–V20)

Although library staff shared the same salary system as academics, they had fewer opportunities for extra jobs. They needed to be at work all the time during business hours. There were also fewer jobs available for library professionals, and in particular, less after hours work. Librarians therefore faced more difficulties in gaining extra income to support their
living. However, by having a single job, library staff had more time to work for the university. As a result, their contribution and devotion to work have been acknowledged by some academics:

*Library staff are very enthusiastic and devoted. I think under the difficult Vietnamese circumstances, their work is really wonderful.* (Academic–V19)

*Once I worked with librarians, I realised that they are very capable. They teach information and research skills to students really well. It is truly what students expected to learn. They are also very good at IT. They have done an excellent job.* (Academic-Section head–V22)

The university was fortunate that not all academics worked outside for extra income. There were still many who contributed keenly to the innovation of the education system. This was one of the very few state universities in the country that was teaching subjects in various foreign languages as well as in Vietnamese. Many of the university leaders, heads of faculties, senior library staff and teaching staff were young, innovative and devoted staff who had graduated overseas (particularly from Australia). Their willingness to make changes to the traditional education system, teaching styles and curriculum created a strong momentum for structural change:

*I was fortunate to work in an academic environment in which my colleagues were interested in updating new resources for teaching. It made a difference between our university and others, since some of them still used the syllabus from the 1980s.* (Academic–V12)

More importantly, they shared an ambition to apply the knowledge, skills and experience that they had gained internationally. Some of them valued the contribution of the library staff and the importance of the library resources in their work practice. This could help explain why collaboration between academics and librarians has achieved high levels in some faculties, despite the less favourable conditions of the centralised management structure discussed above.

**Main insights 6.1:**

The university governance structure was very bureaucratic and the university leaders wield considerable power over subordinate divisions.

Both faculties and the library had little autonomy in decision-making and little financial independence, but the library was more disadvantaged due to the absence of committee representatives at the university-wide level.

Budget constraint was the major issue for the university. Both academics and library staff had low incomes, but academics had more opportunities to earn extra income from work outside the university, which left them less time for the university. Librarians, while having no second job, seemed to have more time to work, and their effort was recognised by academics.

The levels of collaboration varied significantly across academics, faculties and libraries and were mostly based on the personal relationship of library staff with academics.
6.2 Library–faculty collaboration structure

This section illustrates characteristics of the collaboration structure between the library and faculties. It explains why collaboration succeeded in some faculties but not in others. From a structurationist perspective, analysing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such a system grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction (Giddens, 1984, p. 25).

6.2.1 Structured vs. unstructured systems

In this university, the collaboration structure between academics and library staff was typically ad hoc. Library and faculty were two separate units with no indication that they needed to collaborate to achieve common goals or fulfill specific tasks. The lack of common work requiring collaboration between academics and library staff limited their mutual interaction and influence on each other’s work.

For instance, the university had called for a reform of the conventional education strategies, requiring faculties and the library to develop their strategic action plans. Faculties planned to redevelop their course content and teaching materials and teaching methodologies, whilst the library intended to renew library resources development strategies and restructure information skills training programs. All units submitted their plans separately to the senior management committee, then commenced their plan using their own resources. If the strategies that faculties and library implemented were interconnected and complementary, this would help enhance the quality of the education innovation programs of the university. In particular, the redevelopment of the course content and teaching materials would benefit from relevant library resources, while the library skills training programs would support faculties to transform the current content focused-approach to a skills-based approach.

As far as I observed, the picture of the overall collaborative relationship between the library and faculties were quite blurred. We all know that there is a library, but a lot of us don’t know why we need to collaborate with librarians. (Academic–V16)

The current relationship between library and faculties is not very significant. Faculties seems to be too focused on their subject expertise to know that the library has been changing and improving. (Academic–Section head–V18)

Another challenge to collaboration that emphasized the silo structure of the library and faculties was the lack of a communication channel between the two groups through which they could share information about their roles, expectations and useful collaboration activities. Neither group had taken an active role in communicating with the other. Some academics believed that library staff should focus on marketing themselves and working outside the library walls. While the library made great efforts to offer high quality services, their collaboration approach was less strategic, based mainly on relationships at a personal level.
The library has been doing very well in their work, but information was contained within the library so its usefulness was not well known by faculties. (Academic–Section head–V22)

The lack of a structured approach to encourage collaboration from the top down meant their collaboration unstructured. It was more of a solo effort by librarians to collaborate with academics rather than a two-way interaction:

I believe that apart from the voluntary effort that faculty staff and librarians made to work together, the senior management should have played a central role in connecting and supporting us. (Senior library staff–V8)

An interesting example of the importance of the university’s support of collaboration was observed in the day-to-day practice of both the library and faculties. The university asked the library to organise all the materials managed and stored in faculties. These materials needed to be recorded in the library system, although they were still located in faculties. Since the majority of these materials involved foreign languages, library staff needed language support from faculties to complete the materials’ records in the system. Without a functional structure that enabled collaboration between faculties and the library to fulfil the task, library staff met a lot of difficulties in working in the faculties:

We were not welcome. Library cataloguing was more time-consuming than faculties thought. They needed to assign staff to translate the citations but it seemed difficult for them to arrange. They started getting annoyed because we worked all day long for weeks and weeks. The way we organised materials was also very different to what faculty staff were used to, which was confusing to them. (Librarian–V6)

In order to complete the job, the library had to keep asking for support from senior management. Once the university provided support, the collaborative work progressed smoothly. Over time, academics and library staff developed mutual understanding of each other’s roles and expectations, so that their joint activities were completed successfully. It is noteworthy that with support from senior management, this partnership subsequently became more structured and occurred on an annual basis.

Within the library’s organisational structure, the library assigned a liaison team to work with academics in two areas, i.e., skills development and resource management (Figure 6-2).
At the top level, the university librarian and the associate university librarian developed strategies and organised collaboration programs and activities with senior faculty leaders. At the middle level, the skills training team leader coordinated with the library resources manager to work with liaison library staff. They also joined liaison staff to work directly with academics if necessary. Liaison librarians, under the direction of the two line managers, collaborated with academics in all faculties according to the area of their expertise and their personal relationship with a particular faculty.

In contrast to the library, faculties had no particular staffing role for coordinating collaboration activities with librarians. In the current system, some young academics who took extra administrative roles might be asked to make contact with library staff if there were joint events. This lack of a corresponding structure for collaboration between the library and faculties created barriers in day-to-day communication and interaction:

> In our faculty, there were very few instances where academics collaborated with librarians in organising educational activities. The course coordinators have never thought of inviting librarians to participate in our curriculum design meetings or education seminars. Similarly, when attending library events, I have rarely seen any academics. Sometimes, when I organised our faculty events, I included library staff in the recipient list, but library staff never thought that they were expected to come, excepting if I contacted them directly to invite them. (Academic–Section head–V23)

From a personal perspective, the unstructured approach that library staff or academics started with to build their work relationship paved the way for a more structured collaboration approach. One of the few examples involved a faculty in which one academic had a long standing friendly relationship with some librarians. This was initiated by the voluntary
involvement of the academic in translating information about some materials into Vietnamese, so as to help the librarians create description in MARC (Machine-Readable Cataloging) records. More recently, the librarians shared information with the academic about the information literacy program, as the academic was very interested in organising information literacy programs for her final year students undertaking their minor theses. The teaching partnership started from unstructured general training sessions and moved easily to subject tailored and regular programs for all students in the course.

Collaboration activities at this university occurred on both an ad hoc and a structured basis. Each approaches was important and complementary for the achievement of high-end collaboration. Further discussion about the influence of structural and personal dimensions is given in sections 6.4 and 6.8.

6.2.2 Changes impacting on the library structure

The library experienced significant changes in structure and development strategies that positively affected on the traditional perception of academics about librarians. The transition moved from a technical collection management focused role to a more academic and scholarly approach, i.e., focusing on collaboration with academics in teaching information literacy, providing academic support, and becoming involved in research projects. Along with the organisational restructure, the library actively implemented various development strategies.

The first strategy entailed emphasising the internal change in library operational policies. The library operated a new service model, which utilised a user-centred approach rather than the traditional collection management focus. The role of library staff moved from custodians of books to academic librarians, where supporting users with different needs of information and learning skills was emphasised.

_We were unhappy that our request to give access for undergraduate students to research collections was refused by librarians due to their fear of losing materials. Those collections are good source of references for our students to write research papers. It is good now that everything is accessible. The library is changing and is more open to clients' needs._ (Academic–V14)

The second change occurred in the way the library supported faculties to manage their own collections. Instead of seeking to bring the resources into the main library as in the past (an approach that was viewed negatively by academics), library staff supported faculties to build their own collections by organising and managing their materials in a searchable integrated system. The professionalism of librarians in organising these materials impressed academics:

_Staff from [faculty's name] came to see our faculty collection. They were amazed with the way our collections are organised. It looks very professional. They will contact librarians soon to help them._

(Academic–Section head–V15)

The third innovation focused on restructuring the library organisation and streamlining business processes. Previously, library staff had worked across all areas. There was little chance for them to demonstrate their expertise in a particular capacity. For instance, when
some staff developed good skills in cataloguing, they were asked to move to client services. The quality of work was affected due to the lack of experienced staff, and the low commitment to work for any specialisation. Under the new structure, library staff work was grouped into specialised areas such as resources management, client services, reference and training, or marketing and promotion. Staff were then assigned according to their expectation, expertise and skills. The change in role assignment had made significant improvements to work quality, staff responsibility, and efficiency. Liaison library staff were more willing to develop new collaboration activities and maintain their longevity of relationship with academics.

The fourth management strategy initiative was openness for discussion, socialisation, and opportunities for capacity building of all staff. This approach created a healthy environment, which facilitated library staff in achieving their work and educational goals. All librarians were supported to pursue further education such as through postgraduate qualifications in librarianship, foreign language study courses, pedagogical training programs or attending conferences:

There are now a lot of opportunities for us to pursue the track we want. I think the degree of appreciation of the role of the library in supporting student learning is getting much better. Some faculties have actively requested me to provide tailored information skills to suit their students’ subjects.

(Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V1)

These innovations in the library structure and management strategies have created important changes in the perceptions of the university wide communities. Librarians felt motivated by the dynamics and the professionalism of the library environment. Many of them enthusiastically contributed new ideas and made various attempts to improve their areas of expertise. Academics were impressed with information skills development programs for both students and staff. Their trust in librarians’ capacities was developing. The senior management of the university gradually recognised the contribution of library staff through the provision of more managerial and financial support to conduct library programs and improve income for the staff involved (see further details in section 6.4.3). The library’s efforts to change the traditional structure of the university social system support Giddens’ theory that “structure is both medium and outcome of the activities whereby actors knowledgeably reproduce social life in the course of daily social encounters” (Giddens, 1982, p. 109).
Main insights 6.2:

The collaboration structure between academics and library staff was very ad hoc. Library and faculty were two separate units in which there was no indication that they needed to collaborate.

The library placed a strong focus on collaboration, whilst faculties did not. Without a functional structure, library staff encountered a lot of difficulties in working in the faculties.

There was no formal communication channel between the two groups. Neither group had taken an active role in communicating with the other.

The library has experienced significant changes in terms of structure and development strategies, leading to positive changes in the traditional perception of academics concerning librarians.

The next section explores the main areas of collaboration between academics and librarians. It highlights important initiatives that both groups have taken in recent years.

6.3 Collaboration contexts

In this university, library collaborative activities occurred in three areas: client services and skills education; resources development and management; and research projects. The degree of collaboration in each area was driven by the interest of academics, their emerging needs, and perceived potential benefits of the partnership to their students.

6.3.1 Client services and skills education

This was the most targeted area of library collaboration, and occurred when academics interacted with library staff while using library resources and services or organising skills development classes for students. One typical example was the incorporation of an information literacy skills component into the Foundation program for all first year students. An academic who managed the program became aware of the needs of his students to develop information literacy skills to meet the course requirements. He then contacted and worked with librarians to develop and integrate information skills training into the curriculum. The main program contents included library orientation, information skills such as Internet searching, using databases, citing and referencing, and research skills (further details are provided in section 6.4.3). Apart from this structured program, some academics in different faculties contacted librarians to develop more subject-tailored information skills classes for their students. However, in most of these programs, library staff were more likely to conduct the training and assessment by themselves, rather than co-delivering it with academics.

6.3.2 Resources development and management

In this long established area of collaboration, academics worked with the library to support the acquisition and management of relevant course materials. Library staff purchased materials requested by faculty and made them available for academics’ and students’ use. To process
materials in foreign languages, the library contacted academics to support them in translating citations of materials for the description and cataloguing process. In addition, the library also supported faculties to organise and manage their own faculty library collections.

### 6.3.3 Research projects

This was a new area of collaboration. Library staff worked together with academics in a number of research projects such as development of library technology, the development of learning resources and facilities for language studies or improving the skills development for students and staff. The increasing focus of the university on research has enabled library staff to conduct more research projects and expand their collaboration with academics in this area. This researcher has been involved in two research projects with this Vietnamese university. One is a faculty project involving librarians in evaluating the levels of information skills of students after attending the library skills training. The other is a collaborative funding project between the Australian university and the Vietnamese university (the two case studies of this doctoral research) to study the needs of Vietnamese researchers and skill levels of researchers as well as librarians in order to facilitate their cooperation. Being involved in these two projects provided the researcher with an opportunity to develop further insights into the state of collaboration between academics and library staff.

<table>
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<th>Main insights 6.3:</th>
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<td>There are three areas of collaboration between academics and library staff in this university: client services and skills education, resources development and management, and research projects. Client services and skills education activities were developing to a greater extent, compared to the long established resources development and management programs, or the recently emerging participation in joint research projects.</td>
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The next section presents findings concerning the place of power in collaboration between academics and library staff.

### 6.4 Power asymmetry amongst different groups in the collaborative relationship

Findings from the Vietnamese university case study indicated a high level of power asymmetry between academics and library staff. Although this asymmetry has been decreasing over time, much of its influence was still perceived by members of both groups.

This section discusses the extent to which power domination affected roles and professional boundaries between academics and librarians. Alongside various issues of power constraints, there have been successful cases of collaboration in which both academics and library staff displayed a high level of respect and trust for each other. One of the collaboration examples is given in section 6.4.3.
6.4.1 Role of individual participants and the scope of practice in a collaborative partnership

One of the most common gaps that affected the perceptions of academic and librarian participants concerning collaboration was the lower appreciation of the educational role of librarians in society. The longstanding poor conditions of most libraries in Vietnam, particularly public and school libraries, have created a negative impression over many generations. Although Vietnamese academic library systems have largely been in a better state than the public and school libraries, the position of university libraries was unavoidably disadvantaged by this general social perception.

*The library is a secondary component of the university. It was just lip-service if someone said that the library is very important. If it is, it should have never been always under-resourced . . . *(Academic–Section head–V15)

*The library role in supporting teaching and learning activities was not recognised. That is why it has not been adequately supported and financed. It is hard for the library to fulfil its fundamental role.* (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V3)

It should be noted that this undervaluation of librarians’ roles was a consequence of various social and organisational factors. From a social perspective, the traditional misperception about librarians’ main jobs as ‘just shelving books’ still prevailed. Much of the librarians’ work such as cataloguing materials, developing subject guides, training in information skills or becoming involved in research projects was little known.

*An academic colleague asked me “what do you guys do in the library?”. I was quite upset but tried to explain my work to her, and she was very surprised. What she thought was that we were just sitting in the library checking out materials for students.* (Librarian–V5)

From an organisational perspective, there was a lack of trust from senior management in the roles and responsibilities of the library, which can be seen as both cause and effect of the asymmetry of power between academics and library staff. It seemed that the university management gave higher priority to faculties than the library. For instance, the library was allocated an annual budget for library material acquisition and collections development of the whole university. However, faculties were sometimes allowed to purchase materials for the faculties’ own collections using the library budget, without giving any notification to the library. Since faculty collections were mainly available for academics rather than students, the unexpected loss of budget imposed a fiscal constraint upon the library’s effort to acquire materials requested by the whole university community:

*If faculties wanted to build their own collection for academics’ use, they should have used their faculty budget instead . . . It was always very difficult for the library to get their purchasing list approved. It is all about red tape.* (Librarian–V6)
The board of management’s more bureaucratic handling of the library as opposed to faculties revealed the disproportionality of power within the organisation. Faculties were known more as the “money makers” of the university. The bigger the faculty’s size, the more advantages it possessed. In this case, “Power does not, of course, depend solely upon the size of a population brought together within an administrative order. But the size of system organisation does make a very significant contribution to the generation of power” (Giddens, 1984, p. 260).

The university’s actions have reinforced the social structural divide between faculties and the library. The library, as a consequence, faced more challenges in narrowing the gap in social perceptions of its position in the university, as well as in society as a whole.

_I think the asymmetry of power existed in the organisational structure and behaviours, which has created and reinforced the social gap between academics and librarians._ (Academic–V17)

In addition, in many Vietnamese universities, it used to be common for recruitment policies to state that applicants for librarian jobs might not need to have library qualifications. In the past, redundant staff from faculties or departments were moved to work in the library. The library used to be a place for, amongst other things, those who could not work anywhere else. These problems have affected not only the perception of outsiders, but also the quality of library work, as well as the library environment in which most staff were unhappy with the governance systems. This power asymmetry echoed Giddens’ concept of _Sanctions._ “The constraining aspects of power are experienced as sanctions of various kinds, ranging from the direct application of force or violence, or the threat of such application, to the mild expression of disapproval” (Giddens, 1984, p. 175)

Although these recruitment policies have changed in recent years, their lasting impact still inhibited the positive promotion of the role of librarians:

_The social prejudice that those who were fired or unable to do other jobs were moved to the library, still has negative effects on the position of the library and librarians today. It has changed, but only a little bit over time._ (Librarian–V4)

_Many academics do not understand library jobs and the work culture of the library. They assume that the library is just a place to keep books. They also think that library jobs are so simple that anyone can do them whether or not they have librarianship education._ (Senior library staff–Sessional academic staff–V7)

Another reason for the lack of awareness about the emerging roles of librarians in teaching information literacy skills for students or organising course materials was that these services were mostly new to academics. Due to the traditional Vietnamese teaching and learning style in which students were normally expected to read text books, the library was primarily used for borrowing course materials or as a study space. Very few academics showed interest in going to the library, either because they had not acquired the habit of visiting the library in
their student days, or else the library collection had very few quality materials beyond course
text books.

Overall, the stereotyping of librarians and the insufficient support of the university for the
library has exerted a negative impact on the perceptions of university communities regarding
the usefulness and necessity of the library. To minimize this, the library has placed a greater
focus on collaboration with faculties in teaching information literacy and participating in
academic activities at the university. Their exceptional effort has meant a definite
improvement in the current social structures, which will help them to retain their role in the
university. However, it was strongly recommended by sympathetic academics that the library
develop strategies to communicate their roles to a wider university community:

> It is a pity that many academics do not know that librarians are able to provide support for course
> activities, particularly in improving information literacy skills for students. There should be a forum to
> enhance communication and the mutual understanding for both parties. In that way, the library could
> share with academics information about the new materials, skills training programs or individual
> support services for students. (Academic–V11)

The next section explores the different characteristics of the two professions and how these
differences have hindered their collaboration.

### 6.4.2 Professional divide

Apart from social and organisational structure constraints, a professional divide proved to be a
significant barrier in collaboration between academics and librarians. Despite the efforts that
library staff have made to narrow the gap, as well as the willingness to collaborate shown by
some academics, the distinctive features of the two professions – and particularly the power
domination of the academic group – remained the major constraints in their daily interaction.

Academics were in well recognised positions, and possessed higher status in the university
than librarians. To be an academic, candidates were often required to have post graduate
education and extensive knowledge of their disciplines. There was also a tradition that
academics were usually high performing students or those who had achieved outstanding
success in a research area. In society, the academic profession is one of the most well
respected careers. In contrast, librarianship, being less competitive and requiring lower
qualifications, received insufficient recognition in the academic world:

> I think culturally it is true that there is a gap in the two professions because in Asian culture, teachers
> are well respected. The lecturers even get higher respect because they often have PhDs. (Liaison
> librarian–Sessional academic staff–V1)

> Being an academic requires a doctorate or master degree. While some librarians have university
degrees, their entrance score and recruiting system are less competitive. But I think they are doing well
in their area of expertise. (Academic–V16)
The status difference between the two groups directly impacted on the level of confidence among library staff. Also, academics’ perceptions of the knowledgeability gap affected their level of trust in librarians’ ability to work on educational activities. Some library participants expressed their experiences of difficulties in building trust with academics. Quite often, academics showed little interest in collaborating with librarians. The gap was even more marked with senior academic staff or big faculties:

*It is hard to have a meeting with faculty leaders. We were usually referred to their personal assistant or lower level staff. I felt less confident if I needed to make another attempt.* (Librarian–V6)

*It was usually hard in the early stage. Academics do not think that our information literacy training is important. They don’t trust our expertise and skills.* (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V2)

This knowledge divide has frustrated librarians’ effort to go beyond their traditional role. For instance, to enhance the quality of the information literacy skills programs and to integrate these contents into the curriculum, librarians needed to acquire sufficient information about the curriculum structure, assessment and current teaching practice in the faculties. However, the disconnection of work between the two groups, as well as the preconception of librarians’ role, has meant a lack of awareness about the expertise of librarians in teaching information skills:

*S sometimes, we felt that we came to faculty’s seminars as uninvited guests.* (Senior library staff–V8)

*We would not know why we need to invite librarians to participate in our faculty meetings. I think librarians need to convince us about the importance of their involvement in our discipline.* (Academic–V11)

*Librarians do not necessarily need to be good at a faculty’s subject. What they need is to be trained as experts in the librarianship profession.* (Academic–Section head–V20)

Interestingly, the perception of participants about the professional boundary varied. Instead of feeling negative about the unwelcome attitudes of some academic staff, some librarian participants were confident about their own expertise and their efforts to change prejudices about librarianship. These library staff had positive perceptions and a good understanding about the nature of academics’ work and culture as well as the current pressures of being an academic. They approached academics on a personal level through social networking events and social interactions in the workplace to build a good relationship before starting their work relationship. As a result, many of the successful collaboration projects were based on academics’ and librarians’ individual relationships. These explained why collaboration succeeded despite the notable challenges of social, structural and professional constraints.

The next section reports findings of one exceptional case of collaboration in the university.
6.4.3 A case of successful collaboration

This is a story of an outstanding partnership between a group of liaison librarians and a group of academics of one faculty in integrating and teaching information literacy within a foundation unit for all first year university students. The collaboration showed great effort by librarians in overcoming social, structural and professional challenges to display their roles and capabilities to work in academia.

Incorporating information literacy content into the unit was the joint idea of a liaison librarian and a course coordinator, who had been colleagues and friends for a long time. Initially, the course coordinator intended to send his colleagues to the library to learn more about information literacy so they could re-teach it to their students. However, the university librarian asked to take the main teaching role of information literacy for librarians. She persuaded him that information literacy was the specialisation of librarians. Librarians would not only help faculty tailor the programs for students, but also give them on-going support even after they had completed the course.

The course coordinator went back to discuss this with his colleagues. Most of them disagreed due to their lack of trust of the librarians’ capacity and the potential loss of their income or teaching hours (academics of the university needed to complete a minimum number of teaching hours per year or their salary could be reduced). The university librarian convinced the faculty of the librarians’ teaching experiences as well as their postgraduate qualifications. She suggested that academics would still receive their salary because they co-taught the subject with librarians. Fortunately, the coordinator was supportive:

* I was initially quite hesitant to give the teaching role to librarians, however they had experience in teaching similar content in the library, which gave me some confidence about their capability. (Academic–Course coordinator–V18)*

All the same, his decision to hand over the lecturing role on information literacy skills to librarians faced resistance from some academic staff. They did not think information literacy skills either important to teach, or appropriate for the subject. The early days of teaching with librarians occurred in a tense environment, since some academics were uncomfortable with observing classes or co-teaching in them.

* I was quite nervous in my first class since one academic looked very sarcastic about our involvement in the subject. (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V1)*

* They weren’t happy with me at all. (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V2)*

On the other hand, although the librarian team was very happy with the new teaching role, they did not realise how heavy the workload could be. The library teaching team had four members, all with full-time librarian jobs to do. During the first six months of collaboration, these librarians delivered and assessed 57 classes of more than 250 teaching hours to approximately 1500 students. They were excited with the new role, but overwhelmed and
exhausted with the workload. After their teaching slot, they still had to return to the library to finish their library jobs.

Furthermore, a normal class started at 7 am, 30 minutes earlier than the start of normal library working hours. The different start time necessitated librarians arranging their own family commitments to come to work 30 minutes earlier. All four teacher librarians had small children who needed to be at childcare centres before 7 am. Thus, the early start of lectures, which seemed a norm among academics, presented difficulties for the daily life of librarians.

Another unexpected challenge was the absence of any truly collaborative activities between lecturers and librarians. For example, they did not work together to develop the lecture materials or to share experiences in teaching. The lecturers only attended some of the classes that librarians first taught. Librarians expected greater collaboration from lecturers, to share knowledge and teaching experiences in order to extend librarians’ knowledge and roles. Academics however seemed to be busy with their own work, so rarely came to classes. In the meantime, the university paid lecturers their full salary for all of the class hours and the student assessments that librarians undertook. This meant that the librarians’ emerging role and efforts to work were not recognised. All these challenges confronted the librarians, but it was a great opportunity for them to improve public perception about their roles and the library professionalism: an opportunity that they could not afford to miss.

The university librarian also realised that the librarians’ new role needed to be formally acknowledged by the university in order to solve the problem of library staffing shortages. If the university did not recognise the librarians’ new role, the library would not be able to recruit new staff. The more information literacy classes they taught, the heavier the workload they had to deal with. Additionally, acknowledgement of their contribution was important to keep up the librarians’ motivation.

The university librarian discussed with the course coordinator the possibility of formalising the teaching role of the librarians, and of having a resource framework to sustain the teaching activities for librarians. He supported the library:

_I felt sorry that library staff have not been paid their teaching allowance as they should have been for their hard work._ (Academic-Section head–V18)

but the procedures were complicated and beyond his role. The university librarian needed to obtain formal support from various bodies (such as the faculty, the Training department, the Research Management department), before making a proposal to the management board. However, the board of management still said “No”.

Despite this discouraging response from the board, the librarian team did not give up. Instead, they kept working and built up their relationship with the academic colleagues. The librarians’ teaching skills were maturing through intensive experience delivering lectures in an academic environment. They also extended their training program to other faculties. They strove to change the way in which the board of management and academics perceived their role. After
three years, the teaching roles of librarians were formally acknowledged. The academic role of the library has thus been increasingly recognised. They were invited to teach students across many faculties’ programs. Some staff who used to resist the integration of information literacy to the subject now became friendly with librarians.

_The relationship becomes much better over time. We have a good understandings about each other, and that has made the common work go much easier._ (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V1)

All the co-lecturers of the subject agreed that librarians should be paid for the hours they taught. Ultimately, the university agreed to pay librarians at an equal rate of teaching hours with academics. Their capabilities in teaching information literacy became well-known in the university. More importantly, they had triumphed in the face of a lack of confidence, limited initial support and various unpredicted complications at work and in life.

**Main insights 6.4:**

There was a high level of power asymmetry between academics and library staff.

- From a social and structural perspective, the traditional misperception of librarians’ roles still prevailed, thus presenting a lower appreciation of the educational role of librarians in the society.

- From an organisational (structural) perspective, there was a lack of trust from senior management staff in the roles and responsibilities of the library, which can be seen as both cause and effect of the asymmetry of power.

- From a professional perspective, a significant barrier in collaboration between academics and librarians has existed. Academics were in well recognised positions, and possessed senior status, higher education and extensive knowledge of their disciplines.

However, with Giddens’ suggestion that “human agents are all knowledgeable”, the exceptional effort of librarians in demonstrating their capabilities and expertise as well as building relationships with academics has changed the structure and in turn improved collaboration.

The next section explores particular values of academics and librarians’ work culture and how these features influenced their collaboration practice.

**6.5 Socio-cultural dynamics**

Collaboration was characterised by the dynamism of social and cultural values as a result of interaction between individuals and groups from different professions at the university. This section discusses the interplay of national, organisational and professional cultures of academics and library staff and how these systems affected their collaboration practice.
6.5.1 Influence of the leaders’ culture

A particular characteristic of the work culture of both academics and library staff in this university was the strong influence of organisational leaders’ work culture on the work practice of their subordinates. The university has experienced different management styles of the university leaders who have exerted a strong impact on the working style of university staff over time. These leaders’ cultures were significant in informing the work culture of the whole university.

For instance, one of the university presidents with long work and life experience in the United States applied his Western working style to university management. He created a direct and dynamic work culture which involved a flatter hierarchy, fast decision-making processes and a reduced fear of taking risks. He also gave faculties and the library a voice in university decisions. The university structure was still tiered, but less bureaucratic. Under this Western style management culture, staff were encouraged to adopt a more independent learning approach to teaching practices. Staff and students were encouraged to use library resources for academic activities. The librarians’ role encompassed teaching and instruction. To improve library resources and infrastructure, the leaders called for overseas donors to support the renovation of the library and acquisition of subject materials. Overall, the role of the library was better recognised and supported.

When the university experienced a more Asian management style that was more bureaucratic in its decision-making and administration, the work pace was slow and very cautious. More procedures and tiers were required in the management system, and faculties and the library had less say in the decision-making process. The Asian learning culture used a more teacher-centred approach in which students primarily used lecture notes and course books to complete course requirements (Chen, 2014). In such didactic teaching style, the library’s role became less recognised. Moreover, the working culture of faculties and the library were changed to adapt to a particular management culture. Nevertheless, it should be noted that not all Western culture styles are dynamic and encourage greater initiative at lower levels, nor are all Asian styles rigidly bureaucratic and traditional. These approaches varied amongst the countries and “the range of culture determined value systems” (Hofstede, 1984, p. 81).

At the faculty level, the work culture of the leader also had a certain impact on the local culture.

I think our work culture depends on the leader's culture. If he is an organized and strategic person, it is more likely his subordinates will plan their work ahead. If the leader is poor at planning, the faculty members would just do things as they go. (Academic–V16)

This culture therefore varied from one faculty to another. If faculty leaders expressed interest in utilising library resources and services to support teaching and research of the faculties, academic staff were more likely to work with librarians. In such cases, the level of
collaboration with those faculties was more positive than in those whose leaders lacked interest and trust in librarians’ roles and expertise:

*If the faculty leader is interested in using the library and working with librarians, they will encourage or even request staff to work with us.* (Librarian–V6)

*I knew that there were Deans who never came to the library. They weren’t aware of the usefulness of the library or of something called library collaboration* (Academic–Section head–V23)

*We could have done the jobs better if the faculty leader had welcomed us.* (Librarian–V4)

The work culture of the university librarians could also be influenced by creating either a dynamic or passive work environment. For example, under the traditional work style of one university librarian, the library focused on preserving their established role of collection management rather than supporting academic activities. Library staff culture was more conservative and displayed a strong avoidance of uncertainty. The change of library management through a new appointment led to changes in the work attitudes of library staff. The newly recruited university librarian had considerable work experience in an international organisation and applied a more Western management style in the library. Her work style impressed library colleagues through endeavours to transform the library:

*There used to be a lot of red tape around what we wanted to do. Now the opportunities have become endless. We are motivated to make a lot of changes. We incorporate new skills programs to support the needs of different faculties. Everything is different.* (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V1)

Another example of the influence of the library leader’s culture in shaping the organisational work practice was recorded on a library visit by a visiting scholar from an Australian university, who commented: “*I was surprised that the library was so 'Australian' in terms of services and organisation*”.

The influence of the leaders’ culture on the organisational culture reflected a big power gap between senior and junior ranks. To some extent, this finding can be explained by the high index of Power Distance in Asian culture of Hofstede (1980, 2001) where subordinates are more likely to accept an unequal power distribution. The influence of leaders’ culture on organisational work culture adds further insight into Hofstede’s theory of national culture and organisational value. However, the top university leaders normally had a greater power in influencing subordinates than the faculty and library leaders. There were cases where some of the faculty leaders were not supported by either the management or subordinate members when they wanted to make changes in their units (see details in section 6.1).

However, due to the university’s international collaboration with institutions from developed countries, the work culture of the university displayed interaction between Vietnamese and Western cultures. In fact, the majority of teaching and management staff of the university had prior study and work experiences in more developed countries. Their internationalised culture...
was reflected in their teaching, working and management style, and was reinforced by daily interaction in collaborative teaching activities with foreign academics. Thus, Hofstede’s cultural theory (1980, 2001) could be considered useful in providing general knowledge about the possible interaction of traditional Asian culture with organisational culture, but the application of his rigid classification of the national cultural framework becomes less relevant when studying the dynamic changes of culture and the interaction of culture of different professions in particular organisational contexts.

In the light of this, Giddens used the duality of structure to facilitate understanding of the interplay of power and normative sanctions and social actions. Cultural values are conceptualised as shared meaning systems and norms in relations with power, knowledgeability of each group’s members and social contexts that together influence the production and reproduction of social actions. This structure serves as a sensitising device in examining the dynamic change of culture and norms as well as how professional culture interacted with the change of structure to influence the behaviours of participants over time.

To better understand the university culture, it is important to explore the distinctive cultural features of each profession and see how their cultural differences influenced their attitudes and actions toward collaboration.

### 6.5.2 Individual vs. collaborative culture

Findings regarding the academics’ and librarians’ work culture of the Vietnamese university were similar to the cultural features of their counterparts at the Australian university. Academic culture was perceived as more individualistic due to the independent nature of teaching and research work. Academics were entitled to work flexibly in terms of workplace and time. Each academic had extensive knowledge of their subjects and research. Apart from scheduled lecture times, academics tended to work elsewhere, outside the faculty. Their interaction with faculty members or colleagues of other departments was therefore quite limited:

> Academics don’t have time. I usually catch up with them when they walk from the lecture hall to the car park. I need to be very brief when I want to suggest some new library resources or skills classes.
> (Librarian–V6)

In daily practice, academics contacted library staff mainly when they needed some specific help for issues that they could not solve themselves. The most likely instances of academics working collaboratively with librarians was in teaching and research projects. However, there were very few such projects underway at any given time. The siloed nature of faculty structure and independent work culture consequently appeared to be a barrier in collaboration.

Librarians’ culture, on the other hand, appeared more collaborative due to the team work and service provision that underlay it. Librarians showed a strong willingness to work with academics whenever there was an opportunity. At the same time, the welcoming and responsive work culture of the library served as an enabling factor of collaboration since it has
gradually influenced and changed the traditional perception of many academics about library roles as well as academics’ attitudes to collaboration:

*We receive very good signals for working collaboratively from the library. If faculties need any help, the librarians will immediately support them as best as they can.* (Academic–Section head–V22)

*I admire what the librarians have done in this university. They have made a big effort to work well in various difficult circumstances.* (Academic–V19)

*We were very enthusiastic when they needed us, then when we asked them, they were so good in return.* (Senior library staff–Sessional academic staff–V7)

Interestingly, the independent nature of academic culture was viewed positively by librarians because of its clear cut role and higher level of autonomy in decision-making. Nevertheless, whilst library culture enabled collaboration, the nature of working in teams sometime created confusion in roles and an unclear scope of practice for both the insiders (librarians) and the outsiders (academics):

*Our individual role is usually not clearly defined. Sometimes, we don’t know how much and how far we should go as a team member. It might also confuse faculties because they just don’t know who to contact. They could be referred to meet other team leaders or librarians. We share the work so they might need to work with several of us.* (Librarian–V4)

Thus, the work culture of each group created both a positive and negative impact on their attempts to collaborate. This finding echoed the theoretical perspectives of Giddens that “structure is always both enabling and constraining” (Giddens, 1984, p. 169). To gain a deeper insight into the cultural influence, the next section explores the related features of faculty and library culture through the daily interaction of academics and librarians.

### 6.5.3 Inside the box vs. Outside the box

The independent structure of academic work afforded academics a high level of autonomy in making decisions about their teaching and research. They had a strong sense of ownership of course content as well as curriculum structure, due to their extensive research knowledge and teaching experience in that subject. Also, as discussed, academics had more flexibility in terms of time and space to work. These work norms in turn facilitated a more dynamic and ‘outside the box’ working style amongst academics.

Librarians’ work by contrast was more structured with hierarchical reporting lines, and typically a lower level of work autonomy. The nature of work focused on collection organisation and preservation, for example, requires adherence to various cataloguing standards and an attention to detail. Librarians had little freedom in their choice of where and when to work. Instead, they were mostly obliged to work in the library during fixed business hours. These particular work characteristics made their working style less dynamic, and ‘inside the box’, compared to that of academics.
In collaboration practices, the differences in work culture created certain conflicts and misunderstandings among both groups:

*Academics have a fast paced working style. They decide very quickly what to do whilst we still need to consider a lot of things.* (Librarian–V6)

*They were shocked when we said that it would take us months to organise their faculty collections. When we worked together, they seemed to understand our work better. Cataloguing books requires a lot of steps. However, when it took too long, they started feeling disturbed. Our work required care and detail, but they asked us to do it quickly. If done quickly, it wouldn’t be accurate.* (Senior library staff–Sessional academic staff–V7)

*The library seemed to have a lot of procedures and regulations. The new academic staff are encouraged to attend a library tour before using the library. I think it is unnecessary. It makes new staff feel agitated to come to the library.* (Academic–Section head–V12)

However, it should be noted that particular features of academics and librarian cultures can vary between individual participants. Social and personal values influenced and interacted with the professional culture. Some librarians were seen as more dynamic and ‘outside the box’ than others. By the same token, some academics could be highly resistant to changes compared to others.

In addition, the working culture of the library has experienced significant changes, particularly since librarians embraced their emerging teaching function. Undertaking this role has allowed them to approach and experience academic culture and norms, which in turn could help in bridging the gap of the two professions. Furthermore, the strong capabilities of librarians in teaching digital literacy such as Internet searching skills or referencing software have impressed academics.

*Their information literacy skills and technology skills are very useful. They needed to be known to the wider teaching community.* (Academic–V11)

Librarians also voluntarily provided technical support to academics using software that the librarians taught to all teaching staff. This transition in the librarians’ role made their culture more dynamic whilst narrowing the cultural gap with academics. In other words, the ‘inside the box’ value of librarians’ culture was changing with the development of technology and capabilities of librarians in using technology for teaching practice.
Main insights 6.5:

The work culture of both academics and library staff in this university was strongly influenced by organisational leaders’ work culture. It could either create a dynamic or passive work environment. Different management styles of the university leaders also shaped the work practice of the subordinates.

Academic culture was perceived as more individualistic, ‘outside-the-box’ due to the independent nature of teaching and research work. Librarians’ culture, on the other hand, appeared more collaborative and ‘inside-the-box’ due to its nature of team work and service provision. Given these differences, the work culture of each group had both positive and negative impact on their attempts to collaborate.

On the theoretical front, Giddens used the duality of structure to facilitate understanding of the interplay of power and normative sanctions and social actions. This structure is useful in examining the dynamic change of culture and norms as well as how professional culture interacted with the change of structure to influence the behaviours of participants over time.

In the next section, the mediating role of technology and its consequences in transforming collaboration practices between academics and librarians is discussed.

### 6.6 Influences of technology on collaboration practice

As noted in section 5.6, the influence of technology on collaboration was an important factor that mediated the interactions of academics and library staff.

#### 6.6.1 Mediating roles of technology in collaboration

The incredible development of technology over the past twenty years has transformed the traditional operation of the libraries to a situation where library materials can be searched and accessed either physically or digitally. In the 1990s, the library operated in a closed-stack system with the prevalent use of card catalogues for searching materials, log books for lending materials, and local network library software to manage collections. Library users normally wrote down their requests and waited for the librarians to find materials in the locked stores for them. Since 2000, the library has been transformed into an open-access model using OPAC and library management systems to facilitate all searching, borrowing and user account management activities. This library technology innovation has made a significant impact not only on the library operations and information management, but also on the public’s traditional perceptions of librarians as ‘handmaidens’ or ‘book custodians’ in the library.

*Technology has changed the way we think about the library, particularly with the usefulness of digital libraries and electronic resources. (Academic–V14)*
Alongside the development of technology, the proliferation of Internet resources and Google search have significantly changed the way academics use the library. Their information searching and using behaviours were driven by the convenience and availability of information.

*The library is no longer the only source of information. We used to come to the library to copy journal articles and news to make our teaching materials. But now everything is available online.*

(Academic–Section head–V21)

As in the Australian university, these changes can be seen as a constraint on collaboration between academics and librarians, since their opportunities for face-to-face interaction become limited.

*S有时候我们需要直接沟通来理解学术人员以及被理解。他们能看到图书馆网站上的内容，但他们没有感受到它的重要性，直到我们进行了沟通。* (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V2)

On an enabling front, the development of technology and Internet resources have facilitated the changing role of librarians. Instead of simply giving bibliographic instruction and manual searching skills to students, their instructional content was extended to teaching information skills for Internet and scholarly resources searching. Librarians interacted with technology to provide library instruction instead of using physical materials. Their capabilities in using technology and teaching research-supported software programs such as EndNote or SPSS were acknowledged by academics:

*Their IT skills are excellent. They also possess good information skills that would be very useful not only for students but also for academic staff.* (Academic–Section head–V22)

More importantly, technology was the key communication method used in various contexts of collaboration. Email, mobile phone, intranets and social technologies were frequently utilised for communicating and organising collaborative activities between academics and librarians. Information technology allowed participants to make their own choice of a method that most suited their needs and contexts of use:

*I use my university email account for formal communication with faculties and some academics. But for some collaboration activities which were initiated for personal relationships, I usually use my personal email. For building social relationships with academics, I usually use Facebook.* (Librarian–V5)

One striking finding of this research was the way in which, at this university, social technologies such as Facebook or Google Hangout were utilised in building social, organisational and personal relationships. These features are further explored in the next section.
6.6.2 Culture and the use of technology

In the Vietnamese university, the use of social technologies across the professional and social practices has become a part of organisational culture. The popularly used social networking technologies were Facebook, Google Hangout, Yahoo-Messenger and LinkedIn. The use of Facebook has become a widespread phenomenon across the professions. Its usefulness in building personal and work relationships was mentioned widely among participants:

*Sometimes we meet face-to-face in the university but it is quite difficult to make conversations if we don’t know each other. We need to have a good relationship before we go on to collaborate. I think Facebook is interesting because it makes things much easier in building up a friendly relationship. It is easier to start with some Facebook stories before we go on to the work discussion.* (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V2)

*Everyone is busy but if you have a good relationship, they are willing to spend hours with you … .* (Academic–Section head–V22)

The cultural and status barriers between academics and librarians were narrowed by conversations on their Facebook posts.

*It is interesting that many senior staff have Facebook accounts. On Facebook, they are very friendly and have a good sense of humour. We rarely talk when we meet, but are quite comfortable to talk on Facebook. Once we need to work together, we didn’t feel a barrier … .* (Librarian–V4)

*Facebook makes us become friends. You get to know a lot about their interests, hobbies and relationships. Once you know each other, contacting or meeting are going to be much easier.* (Academic–V13)

Participating in the university community Facebook was also seen as a communication strategy for faculties and the library to promote academic activities and events. Observation of faculties’ Facebook pages revealed regular posts about key events such as new international education programs, graduation ceremonies or social events. Similarly, the library had their own Facebook account on which librarians published information about the library events, new resources or training classes:

*[Facebook] spreads information faster than any channels, even our library websites.* (Librarian–V6)

*All of my faculty leaders, Dean and Deputy Deans are on Facebook. We usually upload important faculty events.* (Academic–Section head–V21)

Thus technology not only enabled the university community participants to be connected, but also enhanced understandings about their work, roles and opportunities for collaboration.

Apart from these exceptional benefits of social technologies, there were noted challenges concerning staffing and managing time by librarians:
It takes time to find and accept the right members, particularly with hundreds of student connections. We need to update information, reply to posts, then delete advertisements or unwanted posts. (Librarian–V4)

It is not just about using. We have to buy a Facebook marketing guide to read and set up a business Facebook, then find information, take photos or videos, write, upload, reply, maintain and so on. It is very time consuming . . . . (Senior library staff–V9)

Due to the overwhelming amounts of both organisational and personal posts, some staff had to create a new Facebook account for ‘personal posts’ to run alongside their ‘work account’. The use of social technology seemed to be not only time-consuming, but also affected their privacy:

I try not to upload private events on my account, and restrict the availability of posts to family members and close friends. But for some reason, my colleagues and students can still view and create comments. I had to create a new personal account, it is very inconvenient . . . . (Academic–V12)

Thus, from a theoretical perspective, findings of this section support Orlikowski’s (1992a) views about the limits and opportunities of technology for human choice, and the “interpretively flexible” feature of technology. The use of technology is enabled and constrained by the interaction of technology, human and organisational characteristics.

Interpretive flexibility is an attribute of the relationship between humans and technology and hence it is influenced by characteristics of the material artefact (e.g., the specific hardware and software comprising the technology), characteristics of the human agents (e.g., experience, motivation), and characteristics of the context (e.g., social relations, task assignment, resource allocations) (Orlikowski, 1992a, p. 409)

6.6.3 Institutional conditions and consequences of interaction with technology in collaboration

When acting on technology (whether designing, appropriating, modifying, or even resisting it), human agents are influenced by the institutional properties of their setting. They draw on existing stocks of knowledge, resources, and norms to perform their work. Often these influences are unarticulated, or reflected on only fleetingly by human agents (Giddens, 1984), and are here referred to as the institutional conditions of interaction with technology. (Orlikowski, 1992a, p. 411)

At this university, the level of technology use varied significantly between faculties and academics. Data collected regarding faculty member use of the e-governance system of the university showed that some faculties had a higher frequency of staff access than others. Although all staff were required to use the university email account and e-governance system, general rules and procedures seemed unable to force or shape the way academic staff interacted with technology:

They never use staff email. You need to contact them via their personal email. (Librarian–V5)
There were a number of reasons behind this limited use of systems by academic staff. Since many academics needed extra work outside the university (as discussed in relation to the issue of low income in section 6.1), their personal emails have tended to be used for work in different organisations. They have also needed to use personal emails for contacting many visiting lecturers who were not provided with an university account due to their casual contracts. Although the university email system allowed users to choose to receive emails that were automatically forwarded from different accounts, very few staff used or knew of this email forwarding function. The infrequent use of the formal university email accounts and the e-governance system created problems in communication:

> Very few academic staff check the e-governance system. After one day, if I don’t have a reply, I need to call them. But some of them turn off their mobile phones when they are teaching. (Librarian–V4)

By contrast, due to the nature of their service provision jobs, and being present at work all day, librarians and administrative staff tended to use these technologies in their everyday work practice.

Participants believed that there was a strong connection between the use of technology and the organisational leaders’ use of technology:

> If the faculty leader does not like to use technology or a particular system, it is very likely that faculty members make little use of technology, excepts the ones that really enjoy hi-tech. (Academic–Section head–V18)

> Since my faculty leaders require everyone to log into the e-governance system twice in a day, and all communications in the faculty is sent through the system only, it is used much more effectively now. (Academic–Section head–V15)

Furthermore, although technology provided a platform that fundamentally shaped the format of various collaborative activities, building a sharing culture in the organisation was an important condition for the successful use of technology. Again, the influence of leaders in building a collaborative environment that encouraged knowledge sharing was reported as significant:

> If the leader likes to share his materials on the portal, most of staff will be more sharing. If he doesn’t, it doesn’t matter whoever wants to upload or not. (Academic–Section head–V18)

From a practical perspective, the use of technology was limited when the capacity or design of that technology failed to meet the needs of humans in a particular context. The limitation of technology consequently caused resistance to using technology amongst staff. It has constrained participants’ intention or decision to use it:
When we run skills training classes we sometimes met technological problems such as slow Internet speed, or the projectors not being compatible with the network, which affects the quality of the sessions. (Liaison librarian—Sessional academic staff—V1)

Technology helps when it works. When it works erratically, most staff feel so frustrated that we don’t encourage them to use it. (Academic—Section head—V21)

It was noticeable that the acceptance of technology also depended on the relationships of the organisational members. Once academics and librarians had developed a good relationship, the limitation of technology seemed to be viewed as an external interruption that could be resolved by an alternative solution, rather than as a constraint upon collaboration:

I think in terms of human factors and training contents, the librarians are wonderful. They are very enthusiastic. But in terms of technology, we had to admit that the computers are running very slow. Luckily, most of our students have their own laptop, so it isn’t a big problem for us. (Academic—Section head—V22)

These findings indicate that in collaboration, positive relationships are an important condition which help partners go beyond the consequences of interaction with technology. However, it was also noted that the institutional structure played an essential role in facilitating the successful use of technology in collaboration. The current structure lacked an adequate resourcing framework to update and maintain high capacity technology. To gain positive outcomes in using technology for collaborative teaching and learning activities, the university needed to develop technological investment strategies as well as organisational structures to build IT capacity for staff, whilst nurturing a collaborative culture of sharing knowledge using the provided communication technology.

Findings about the influences of technology on collaboration suggested some particular forms of organisational structure and users’ behaviour that influence the interaction with technologies.

Main insights 6.6:

The development of technology, and the proliferation of Internet resources and Google search, have notably changed the way academics use the library and have supported the changing role of librarians. Although these developments limit opportunities for face-to-face interaction, technology has undeniably created new forms of communication and interaction in digital spaces.

Social technologies were utilised widely in building social, organisational (structural) and personal relationships. However, the use of social technologies could be time-consuming and affected the privacy of users.

The level of technology use varied markedly amongst faculties and academics. The acceptance of technology depended on its capacity, organisational culture, and relationships between staff.
6.7 ‘Time–space’: temporal and spatial dimensions of collaborative partnerships

Social systems are organised as regularised social practices, sustained in encounters dispersed across time-space. The actors whose conduct constitutes such practices are ‘positioned’, however. (Giddens, 1984, p. 83)

Academics and library staff were ‘situated’ agents of social systems who participated in social practices as part of their day-to-day interaction. Time became one of the most determining factors that influenced the intention and decision of participants to be involved in a collaborative activity. Both academic and librarian participants encountered issues related to a lack of time:

*We don’t have a good plan to develop collaboration with all faculties because we lack time. Most of us have to take on multiple roles.* (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V3)

*Academics are so busy, they don’t have time to work with us.* (Senior library staff–Sessional academic staff–V7)

While the reasons for this among librarians were mainly due to organisational factors such as staffing shortages or the nature of a service provision organisation, academic participants’ time constraints seemed to be caused by various social, organisational, professional and personal factors:

*Academics are entitled to flexible work time, while we are not.* (Librarian–V6)

*They [academics] only focus on their own subjects. Once they finish lectures, they just want to go on with their own work. They are not interested in other subjects or faculty activities at all.* (Academic–Section head–V18)

*The salary is too low. So when they finish, they need to go to external jobs to earn extra income.* (Academic–Section head–V20)

In some faculties, the asymmetry of power connected to differences in time entitlements created disappointment amongst library staff. There was a clear time structure for teaching hours, teaching overtime or teaching out of hours for academics, whilst librarians needed to put a case in writing for any overtime or holiday work. Thus, when collaboration involved extra hours, academics were officially entitled to a time-in-lieu or overtime allowance, while librarians had to seek permission and might not get approval:

*It wasn’t fair for us, since our extra time to work with academics was not recognised. They thought since we were here for 8 hours every day, we should have enough time to do everything.* (Librarian–V5)
Time was deemed not only important in daily interactions, but also essential for making changes:

*It has taken a very long time for the library’s role to be recognised. We worked for no pay for 3 years to be accepted as teaching librarians.* (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V1)

and for building long term and trusting relationships:

*We have developed a better understanding about each other after years. They really trust us so it is much more comfortable to work together.* (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V2)

Time and space were closely related to the three levels of collaboration, i.e., coordination, cooperation, collaboration, as stated by Montiel-Overall (2005b) and Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh (2006). At coordination and cooperation levels, academics and library staff communicated to organise events or training classes, but they mainly worked independently and at their own work space. Collaboration reached the highest level when academics and library staff were involved with strong commitment of time and worked together in a shared space. An example of ideal collaborative activity at this level was the joint development of skills program materials in a subject that was taught by academics and librarians together in the lecture spaces. However, it seemed difficult to reach this level of collaboration because of various structural constraints:

*It would require a lot of changes if we were to integrate skills classes into the curriculum. Currently, we have a very tight allocated time to teach the main course content including tests and other class assessments. The timetable has been tightly designed to make sure that students gained sufficient knowledge of the subject. To save lecture time, we even had to organise the tests after hours.* (Academic–Section head–V21)

This academic suggested an alternative to the embedded skills class, which was known as the ‘parallel class’ in the Australian university case (see details in section 5.3.3):

*I think if we prepare teaching materials together and co-teach extra classes in the library, the content of skills development class will still be relevant and beneficial to students, while not affecting their class time.* (Academic–Section head–V21)

Another finding regarding the influence of space on collaboration was that the close proximity of the library to the faculty would only lead to a successful relationship if a supporting structure and staff willingness were present. An examination of collaboration between academics and library staff of a faculty where the library site was located within the faculty building showed little connection between the proximity and the level of collaboration. In contrast, findings of the Australian university in which a faculty that had a close distance with the library presented important opportunities for interaction and socialisation, which in turn created good opportunities to build up and maintain their collaborative relationship (see details in section 6.4.3).
However, participants at the Vietnamese faculty believed that location seemed to bring little advantage to collaboration in the face of various organisational and structural constraints:

I think we lack purposeful interaction for building up a working partnership here. We are close by so we do meet sometimes to talk, but it is not enough to become a partnership if you don’t have people’s interest. (Academic–V17)

It is really hard to do anything if you don’t have management support. Our library materials are outdated whilst facilities and computers are so old. We need to meet their basic needs of materials before going on with other academic activities. (Librarian–V6)

Furthermore, examples of successful collaboration at the Vietnamese university were found in faculties that were located at some distance from the library (see details in section 6.4.3). In such cases, the success was strongly bound up with the personal relationships and personalities of academics and librarians. These findings provide further insight into the importance of space for success within the Australian university. In other words, space served as an essential element of all collaboration contexts that enabled successful collaboration.

Main insights 6.7:

Both academic and librarian participants encountered issues related to a lack of time for collaboration. With librarians, the reasons were mainly due to organisational factors such as staffing shortages, while time constraints among academics were caused by various social, organisational, professional and personal factors.

The association of asymmetry of power with time and space were found in different levels of autonomy concerning time and space to work to which academics and library staff were entitled.

Time was deemed not only important in daily interactions, but also essential for making changes and for building long term and trusting relationships.

Time and space were closely related to the three levels of collaboration i.e., coordination, cooperation, collaboration. Collaboration reached the highest level when academics and library staff were involved with strong commitment of time and willingness to work together in a shared space.

The next section discusses the influence of personal dimensions on collaboration and how these features interacted with socio-cultural, structural, professional and technological factors.

6.8 Individual dimensions

The significance of personal dimensions including personal relationships, personality, and trust have been revealed throughout various findings of this case study. These elements interact with various other factors to exert a strong influence on the perceptions, intentions
and choices of academics and library staff in terms of collaboration. For instance, where the importance of collaboration was not adequately acknowledged and supported, participants had made more individual effort to build a relationship. They believed that personal relationships made the most difference when initiating and developing their collaborative partnership. An academic who had a good personal and work relationship with librarians recounted:

> If I agree to collaborate, I am very willing to come in even when I don’t do lectures. It is more about my relationship so I will be an active participant. (Academic–Section head–V21)

Personal relationships served as a crucial starting point for collaboration initiatives. As discussed in section 6.2.1, due to the separate working structure with the library, academics were often not aware of the types of collaboration activities that they could establish with librarians or of the roles that librarians played in collaboration. However, communication at a personal level could open opportunities for successful collaboration:

> In a chat with a librarian, I learned that she was doing her Master’s thesis in teaching information literacy for students. I found her topic quite interesting and useful for students particularly in this digital age when they just like to use Google. We talked a lot and she shared with me some materials about her topic. Then we started working together to incorporate information literacy into my course curriculum. (Academic–Section head–V20)

Personal relationships also helped resolve collaboration-related issues more efficiently. For example, the library collaborated with a group of academics from one faculty to develop library management software. The newly developed product was only slowly accepted by library management and some library staff due to the low level of internal collaboration across different areas of the library. To have this application run successfully on the university network required technical support from an IT division of the university that was also responsible for software development. The overlapping responsibilities of the IT division and the faculty’s academics created a tension between them, particularly when they needed to work on intersecting tasks. However, most of the library staff who had good relationships with the system development team preferred to work with the new system, despite the others who resisted it. As a result, a librarian with a good personal relationship with the chief technician of the IT division needed to be actively involved to facilitate the launch of the new library management software:

> Whenever there was a problem with the network, I had to call him for help. It is more about our personal relationship that makes him helpful. (Librarian–V4)

Various collaborative activities were grounded in personal communication and long standing relationships. However, the degree of librarians’ personal relationships with academics varied significantly, depending on various factors such as the personality of individuals, their positions and opportunities for social interaction:

> It is difficult to approach academics of some faculties, particularly senior staff. We don’t have any personal relationships with most of them. (Liaison librarian–Sessional academic staff–V3)
Some academics are enthusiastic. They have many good ideas and are very willing to work with librarians. (Librarian–V6)

The level of collaboration at the university improved as academics and library staff continued to build and maintain their personal relationships. The longevity of their relationship laid the ground for long-term collaboration.

Main insights 6.8:

- Personal dimensions including personal relationships, personality, and trust have had important influences on the perceptions, intentions and choices of academics and library staff in terms of collaboration.
- Interaction at a personal level was crucial for initiating and developing a collaborative partnership. It also helped resolve collaboration-related issues more efficiently.
- The degree of personal relationships varied significantly, depending on the personality of individuals, their positions and opportunities for social interaction.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has reported findings regarding collaboration between academics and library staff at the Vietnamese university. There are five main groups of interrelated factors: governance structure, socio-cultural dynamics, influence of technology, time and space, and individual features that have displayed significant impact on their collaboration practices.

From a structural perspective, the bureaucratic university governance structure, the lack of a faculty and library collaboration structure and low level of support for collaboration from the university management, lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure and technology development, budget constraints, and low income for university staff were major constraints.

From a social and cultural perspective, stereotypes of librarians’ role, power asymmetries between academics and library staff, challenges and their differences of work cultures acted as barriers.

For its part, technology has been utilised meaningfully in building social, organisational (structural) and personal relationships, but its inadequate functionality and usability constrained how participants interacted with it. Patterns of interaction between academics and library staff varied in different contexts associated with time and place. Lack of time was an academic norm and a common reason for not getting involved in collaboration. Finally, positive individual relationships and personal factors were essential conditions for successful collaborative relationships.

Findings in this chapter have supported the usefulness of Giddens’ theory of structuration in elucidating insights into factors influencing collaboration, i.e., the influence of structural
constraints on power asymmetries; the enabling and constraining aspects of social and organisational structures; the conflicts of differences in work culture; and the dynamic changes of culture and norms. Similarly, Orlikowski’s views about the limits and opportunities of technology for human choice, and the “interpretively flexible” quality of technology provided useful guidance in exploring the influence of technology on collaboration. The use of technology is enabled and constrained by the interaction with technology, alongside human and organisational characteristics. However, both theories could give further insights if they were extended to accommodate the importance of individual interaction between participants and how their personal relationships mediate collaboration actions.

The next chapter discusses the similarities and differences in findings from the Australian and Vietnamese case studies, and elaborates on these themes using the relevant literature.
7 Discussion

Based on findings from the Australian and Vietnamese case studies, this chapter compares and discusses the influence of structural, technological, socio-cultural and personal factors on collaboration between academics and library staff in the broader context of the literature and across different social and cultural systems. The first set of factors relate to organisational structure and changes, the differences between the roles of academics and library staff, organisational resources, and facilities. The second set of factors concern the interactions between structure, participants and technology, and how these interactions mediate collaboration practice. The third set of factors concern how the socio-cultural structure shape power asymmetries, differences of work culture between the two groups, as well as the importance of the dimensions of time and space in their collaboration. The final but most significant set of factors concern the perceptions of academics and library staff toward the roles of their partners, trust and respect of the partners’ expertise, the personality of each participant, and the importance of personal relationships in initiating and achieving high-end collaboration. Since these factors are interrelated and influence each other, there is sometimes no clear cut differentiation between them. The discussion lays the ground for the presentation of a collaboration framework and the theoretical contribution of the research at the end of this chapter.

7.1 Governance structure

The literature has generally argued for the importance of organisational and administrative support in facilitating collaboration between academics and library staff in universities (Øveren, 2014; Thull & Hansen, 2009; Wang, 2011). The current research enhances understanding of the influence of governance structures by providing in-depth insights on three interrelated factors: organisational structure, the roles of collaborators, and supporting resources. The following sections discuss the similarities and differences of these factors (Table 7-1) and their consequences for collaboration in the Australian and Vietnamese case studies.
Table 7-1: Comparison of the influences of governance structure on collaboration at the Australian and Vietnamese universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITIES</th>
<th>DIFFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational structure:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Australian university</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lacking an institutional wide structure for collaboration.</td>
<td>- Structure was more complex, multi-tiered but dynamic and more research focused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Libraries placed a strong focus on collaboration, whilst faculties did not.</td>
<td>- The library and faculties had a high level of organisational autonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Libraries focused on collaboration in teaching rather than research, but collaboration reached a higher level amongst research-focused faculties.</td>
<td>- The library had representatives at the senior management and faculty committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roles:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Australian university</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The changing focus of library staff roles from collection management to teaching and research improve recognition of their role in collaboration</td>
<td>- Library collaboration is more structured with the joint participation of academic skills advisers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Staffing constraints: challenges of having multiple roles among academics and library staff.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Inadequate communication of the library staff roles in teaching and research collaborative activities with academics.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resources:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Australian university</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Imbalanced resourcing structure to support collaboration.</td>
<td>- Minor budget constraints.</td>
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7.1.1 Organisational structure

This study noted the absence of any institution-wide structure for collaboration between academics and library staff at both universities. There was little intersecting structure, and few shared missions or tasks that required library staff and academics to work together, apart from the participation of some academics and library staff in joint events such as Open Day or Orientation week. In their daily working practice, academics and library staff operated independently and contacted each other on a voluntary basis. These findings support those by Chu (1997), who argued that library and faculty are separate units in the university and neither has authority to influence the other’s work.
This research has added findings about the effects of the organisational structure of universities through both case studies, particularly the significance of support by senior management and their recognition of the role of library staff in universities. Although the Australian university structure was more complex, showing multiple levels of management and committee structures, the system was dynamic and displayed constant changes in the broader university structure. This could be seen through the various revisions of the committee structure, entailing the establishment or dissolution of various committees. A recent outcome was the library receiving a higher level of involvement in the university management system through the appointment of one of the senior library staff as a member of a senior management committee. Having achieved this equal footing with faculty deans and senior academics on the senior committee, the library had an opportunity not only to contribute to the directions and senior decision-making of the university, but also to communicate their emerging roles to high level management. Furthermore, at lower levels, the library now had representatives in some Faculty boards or teaching and research committees. These changes in structure were an important recognition of the role of the Australian university’s library staff, which enabled them to work as equal partners with academics into the future.

The Vietnamese university structure had fewer organisational layers but was rigidly bureaucratic and presented a high level of power distance between the top management and faculties and the library. In this university, library staff did not have any representatives at either senior management committee or faculty committee levels. This structure revealed a lack of organisational support by university leaders for the library, which was found to be one of the major constraints upon many library collaborative initiatives in Vietnamese universities (Diep, 2011).

However, there were common perceptions by participants at both universities that the positions of library staff and academic staff were not sufficiently equal. It was noteworthy that academics and library staff in the Australian university had different salary systems. Academics were paid according to the academic scale, and could typically expect to receive more income than library staff. This was in contrast to the system at the Vietnamese university where, there was no difference in the salary scale of academics and library staff. However, although the similar income rates existed, academics in Vietnam were still perceived as having a higher social position than library staff. It is therefore important to further examine the interrelated impact of the organisational structure and social structure on the perceived asymmetry of power between the two groups (see further discussion in section 7.3).

A striking finding of the study was the importance of organisational autonomy in enabling successful collaboration. Case study research by Jumonville (2014) identified faculty autonomy as a significant factor driving the success of course-embedded information literacy programs. The present research supports Jumonville (2014) and adds evidence concerning the importance of library autonomy in achieving and sustaining collaborative relationships. The Vietnamese university displayed a different level of organisational autonomy to the Australian university. Faculties and the library in the Vietnamese case had a much lower level of autonomy when making decisions or in spending their allocated budget than did their
Australian counterparts. The central management of the Vietnamese university was involved in the decision-making process of both faculties and the library relating to staff recruitment, staff training, organising seminars, changes to curriculum or acquisitions of facilities and materials. When there was conflict in decision-making with the central management, faculties or the library often compromised. This structure created a barrier to change or else made staff resist changes due to complicated policies and procedures. In contrast, faculties and the library at the Australian university were more dynamic and independent in making their choices since they had a higher level of autonomy in decision-making, which in turn was an enabler for collaboration between academics and library staff.

A comparison of library and faculty structure in both universities showed that libraries placed a strong focus on collaboration with faculties, whilst faculties did not reciprocate. For instance, the Australian library developed a strong faculty team structure in which library liaison staff worked to collaborate with faculties in teaching information and research skills of specific disciplines. Although the Vietnamese library by comparison had not developed a systematic structure, they had a liaison team who established good work relationships with most faculties. Faculties of both universities, on the other hand, had not appointed any staff responsible for collaborating with library staff in teaching and research activities, apart from some joint activities for the Open Day or Orientation week. This unequal arrangement has impeded the opportunity to develop a rigorous structure to facilitate collaborative activities between academics and library staff at the faculty and university-wide level.

Another notable finding was that collaboration could reach a higher level among research focused faculties, as evidenced in the two examples of collaboration in both universities (see details in sections 5.4.3 and 6.4.3). This finding is supported by the survey of Library Journal Research and Gale Cengage Learning (2015) in which academics rated library support of faculty research as most important. It was therefore assumed that the Australian university would have a higher level of collaboration than the Vietnamese partner, because it presented a stronger emphasis on research. However, the structure of the library at the Australian university gave stronger support to collaboration on educational activities such as teaching information and research skills to students than to supporting faculty research. Therefore, collaboration at the Australian university did not in fact benefit from the latter research-focused structure as had been assumed. Further examination of how other factors interplayed with the influence of the organisational structure on collaboration is discussed in the following sections.

### 7.1.2 Roles

This section explains the reasons for the barrier in the perception of library staff’s role, then focuses on the challenges of undertaking multiple roles, particularly among academics.
Initially, arguments were made against the emerging roles of librarians in teaching and integrating information literacy into the subject curriculum (Asher, 2003). This transformation of roles has, however, become the trend today (Bewick & Corrall, 2010; Bell & Shank, 2004). This research found that the most influential change in library structures that had affected collaboration at both universities was the shifting focus of roles from library technical procedures and collection management to teaching activities, providing academic support and getting involved in research projects. At both universities, this transformation of roles has meant significant improvement in the recognition of library staff and academic staff as equal partners in their contribution to teaching and research.

However, involvement in teaching and research does emphasise the importance of obtaining certain knowledge of subject areas, teaching and research skills which library staff might not have learnt from library school. Bell and Shank (2004), Peacock (1999) and Bewick and Corrall (2010) believed that formal and informal training sessions were significant in enhancing the teaching capacity and confidence of library staff in various teaching activities. Such professional training programs were valuable for library staff at both universities: particularly on-the-job training, peer-learning seminars, resource sharing portals, pedagogical teaching programs and faculty conferences, as well as experience working with specific disciplines.

The current research underscored the main causes of misperceptions and lack of understanding about the roles of librarians in teaching and research, as discussed by Austin and Baldwin (1992), Christiansen et al. (2004), Chu (1997), and Julien and Pecoskie (2009) (see further discussion in section 7.3.1). The findings of this study also supported other research by Shen (2012) about the barriers caused by differences in goals, status, knowledge and expertise between academics and library staff; by Welch (2000) concerning the negative impacts of organisational culture and systemic structure; and by Given and Julien (2005) and Walter (2008) regarding the stereotypes of librarians in society (see further discussion in section 7.3.1). However, evidence from this research has revealed cases at both universities where librarians were acknowledged as equal teaching colleagues by academics. In such faculties, library staff have gone beyond their traditional role to become actively involved in teaching information, academic and research skills. Their efforts and knowledgeability have gradually transformed the structure, culture and traditional perception of their roles.

Another important finding of this research emphasises the challenges of multiple roles among academics and library staff, which were perceived as a constraint on collaboration in both universities. All the academic participants were busy with increasing teaching workloads, managing continuous changes in course structures, being involved in research projects and producing publications, whilst also having to take on various administrative tasks. These findings about the nature of academic work are consistent with literature identifying the problems of intensified work and the pressures of complying with higher performance criteria for academic promotion (De Zilwa, 2010; Ferman, 2011; Kenny et al., 2012; Ryan, 2009).

This case study research added findings about the challenges and pressures experienced by library staff who took on liaison roles. Along with the emerging role in teaching information skills in different courses and year levels in faculties and in the library, these staff were still
undertaking library technical roles related to resource development and organisation; they were involved in library projects; they worked at the information desks to provide information skills and academic support to increasing numbers of students; they organised groups and one-on-one tutorials; and they managed various administrative tasks. Liaison staff were unable to work with all academics, and not all academics worked with library staff. The excessive amount of work that both groups undertake has constrained their efforts to initiate new collaborative opportunities or to develop a strategic collaboration structure for entire courses or programs in faculties.

A notable difference in the library structure of roles between the two case studies was that the Australian university library had academic skills advisers jointly work with liaison librarians in collaboration with academics, while the Vietnamese library did not. Indeed, a number of Australian universities have relocated academic skills adviser unit into the libraries. Smith (2011) found that this merger created a holistic approach for achieving effective skills development for students, since librarians worked with academic skills advisers to integrate library information skills and learning skills into the faculty curricula. However, few have studied the impact of this approach on academic skills advisers, librarians and their collaborative activities with academics in the universities. Findings from this thesis support the work of Smith (2011) and add new evidence of the achievements that arise from this restructure – as well as its unintended consequences – from the multiple perspectives of liaison librarians, academic skills advisers, academics and management staff.

In terms of achievements, the merged structure provided an important opportunity for academic skills advisers and librarians to extend the scope of their collaborative teaching activities into a more extensive set of information, research and academic skills, which was also found useful from the academics’ perspective. Most academic skills advisers and liaison librarians described their roles as complementary, rather than a professional amalgamation. This merged structure provided academic skills advisors in particular with a more comprehensive approach to support students than the common one-on-one support approach that they undertook formerly in the language and learning support units. For liaison librarians, working in a team with academic skills advisers gave them more credibility in the eyes of academic staff.

One consequence of the merger for academic skills advisers was the loss of credibility and shifting identity, because they came to be classified as library ‘professional staff’, instead of ‘academic staff’ as they used to be. Academic skills advisors lost status, salary, freedom of time and place to work, and academic staff entitlements (e.g., paid conferences and training). This was one of the reasons that this group had a very high turnover rate at the beginning and afterwards. It was also noted that in the early days of the merger, there was a certain tension between academic skills advisers and library staff due to differences in the organisational structure of the library compared to the academic and English language skills unit. Academic skills advisers also faced differences in the nature of work, expertise, scope of practice, work culture and norms. These issues however, were gradually resolved over time as academic skills advisers adapted to the library structure and developed good relationships with staff there.
Overall, the merger of the language and learning skills units with the library has lead to positive results for library collaboration with academics, which were consequently beneficial to this Australian university.

In Vietnamese universities, there was no specific role akin to academic skills advisers, nor language and learning skills units. This role was normally taken by academics as part of their teaching job. When asked about the feasibility of applying a similar restructuring (i.e., merging an academic unit with the Vietnam university library), all academic participants who were lecturers in faculties teaching foreign languages voiced their opposition. They believed that academics are less likely to accept moving to work in the library, since the status gap between academics and library staff is much larger in Vietnam. However, they suggested that the collaborative relationship could be improved by having a faculty staff member working as a coordinator to connect and promote collaboration between the two groups. This would be more feasible and suitable in the Vietnamese university context. The rigid application of a successful service model from one university to the other might not achieve similar outcomes.

The next section discusses the issue of insufficient resources to support collaboration, and its consequences.

7.1.3 Resources

A major finding of this study was the strength of a resourcing framework for building and maintaining collaboration in order to achieve successful and long-term partnerships between faculties and libraries. Investigation of the governance structure of faculties and libraries of both university case studies has revealed a certain imbalance in resourcing structures to support collaboration. For the libraries, there has been evidence of a considerable effort in resourcing activities for collaboration, i.e., development of particular staffing structures, allocation of time, or staff development. On the other hand, very few faculties have provided functional and financial support for academics and library staff involved in collaborative activities.

Taking a broader view, it is noted that both universities faced the challenge of on-going reductions in funding from their central governments. They relied increasingly on other sources of income, such as student fees and external agencies. For the Australian university, the reduction in funding from the central government created challenges to the operation and organisation of faculties and the library. The library faced staffing shortages, and limited budgets for purchasing materials, new technology for collaborative activities and for funding staff development. Due to these fiscal constraints, faculties often preferred spending their budgets on activities that were directly profitable, as opposed to more intangible activities such as collaboration between academics and library staff. For instance, although the Research Skills Development (RSD) framework was indicated as an educational model for the Australian university, around which academics and library staff were expected to collaborate to produce better outcomes for teaching and research, the RSD was not actually resourced for implementation in most of the university faculties.
Similarly, only one faculty in the Vietnamese university allocated regular funding for collaborative teaching activities between academics and library staff. Others provided supporting resources on an irregular basis. Additional issues for the Vietnamese university library were on-going problems of financial and resource constraints: inadequate budgets for library material acquisitions, old facilities, shortage of qualified staff, dated library technology, and a lack of professional development activities. In turn, such insufficient resources have long exerted a negative impact on the perception of local academics about the usefulness of the library.

The next section discusses the interlinked roles of technology and structure on facilitating collaboration, as well as the consequences of these interactions.

**Main insights 7.1:**

A comparison of the influence of governance structures on collaboration at both universities revealed similarities in terms of structure, the changing focus of librarians’ roles and the lack of a resourcing structure to support collaboration. Although the Australian university offered a more complex structure, it presented a higher level of dynamism, organisational autonomy, greater management support and a more structured approach, which positively enables collaboration.

Power asymmetries between academics and library staff were noted in both universities. Libraries placed a strong focus on collaboration with academics, whilst faculties did not reciprocate.

Both academics and library liaison staff faced challenges in terms of taking on multiple roles. Academics were expected to undertake more research and administrative roles, whilst librarians confronted challenges in teaching learning skills and getting involved with curriculum matters.

The Australian library liaison team structure of academic skill advisers and liaison librarians proved to be a useful staffing model for library collaboration, but may not be directly applicable in the Vietnamese context.

Both universities encountered the challenge of funding reductions, but such financial limitations were more serious in Vietnam, resulting in out-dated facilities and limited resources as well as low income for staff.

### 7.2 Structure and technology

The essential role of technology in transforming traditional academic libraries into modern digital libraries is generally acknowledged. The changing impact of technology on academic libraries has been widely reported in the areas of electronic resources development, library federated searching systems, online library instruction classes, digital information, online reference services and digital repositories (Dhanavandan & Tamizhchelvan, 2014; Wright, 2014). However, there is little research studying the impact of technology on collaboration...
between university libraries and academic communities. This remains an important area that can help to achieve the best outcomes for these digital library developments. This section discusses the findings about the influence of technology upon collaboration in both universities (Table 7-2). It also highlights the social aspects of technology in promoting collaboration practices and the importance of a collaborative organisational culture in the adoption and use of technologies.

Table 7-2: Comparisons of the interplay of structure and technology within the Australian and Vietnamese universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITIES</th>
<th>DIFFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Being influenced by the interplay between organisational structure and technology which enabled and constrained collaboration activities.</td>
<td>- High level of technological development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Absence of an integrated system to support collaboration in teaching and research between faculties and libraries.</td>
<td>- Low to medium level of technological development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Level of resistance to technology varied by academics and faculties.</td>
<td>- Significant use of technologies to integrate library resources and skills development into the learning management system, but little use of social technologies for collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Inadequate use of technologies to integrate library resources and skills development into the learning management system, but actively used social technologies in building relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- There was no association between the use of technology by leaders and staff use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initially, this study confirmed the impact of the interplay between organisational structure and technology in collaboration between academics in the universities by examining the difference of the internal collaboration levels at the two university cases and how their participants interacted with technology (Figure 7-1).
Figure 7-1: Constitutive interactions between structure, technology and collaboration practices

The Australian university library placed a stronger focus on internal collaboration. The idea of building a collaborative work environment inside the library was inspired by the library leaders and supported by staff members. This finding was observed in the way that staff utilised different systems to work together in a team and collaborate across the faculties and campuses to support and share knowledge. However, the Vietnamese university library showed difficulties in building internal collaborative relationships at both leader and staff member levels. The inadequate internal collaboration consequently influenced their external collaboration due to the low level of support for each other’s work. A good example of this problem was seen in the lack of management support, staff resistance and inadequate resources for the implementation of the new digital library system, a collaborative project between a group of library staff and members of a faculty (see details in section 6.8).

However, it was worth noting in the Vietnamese case that technology had not only enabled collaboration between the library and a faculty, but also constrained their collaboration due to the low capacity of some key functions of the newly developed digital library system, as well as its incompatibility with the university network. In other words, technology presented opportunities for library staff to manage their digital collections online, but limited their choice of actions when interacting with it. The constraint of an organisation’s internal collaboration structure influenced human intention and interaction with technology. This influence can be perceived as the “internal forms of control – cultural, personal, social structural and technical” that are being embedded in the way people interact with technology (Orlikowski, 1991, p.34).

Further evidence of the significance for collaboration of the interplay between structure and technology was shown by the problems arising in the absence of any integrated system to support collaboration between libraries and faculties. Library staff and academics worked independently in the separate library and the learning management systems. Although library staff made efforts to gain access to the learning management systems, so as to have a better understanding of the current teaching curriculum and activities, many were granted at best only an observer role. Much of the work on which they collaborated with academics, such as
creating subject guides or organising resources and skills for assessment tasks or research modules, was managed separately in library systems. The disconnection between academics and library staff due to the lack of adequate technology to provide a common work platform revealed not only the inefficiencies in attaining collaborative outcomes, but also a barrier in the perception of academics about the role of library staff in academia. These findings support research by Barton and Weismantel (2007) that emphasised the importance of collaborative technology–rich workspaces at Michigan State University libraries that provided a more collaborative work process and experience to enhance the decision-making process of libraries, faculties and students.

At the same time, this technological constraint could open up opportunities for the development of an integrated system for academics and library staff to work together. This might also encourage library staff to collaborate with academics in the learning management system. More recently, the researcher was able to attend a showcase seminar of research and learning skills at the Australian university, and was very impressed with the library staff’s use of technology in collaborating with academics. Various technologies were used to develop and integrate resources, structured tasks and skills assessment into the learning management system. In this instance, the interaction of structure, technology and collaboration practice was found mutually constitutive (Giddens, 1984; Jones & Karsten, 2008). In light of that, universities should consider allocating resources such as time, budget and rewards to support the development of an integrated system and to develop an underlying structure to support its implementation and use.

Examining the role of collaborative technology as a means for mediated communication at three organisations, Karsten (2003) found that the situatedness of communication supports social integration. In this research, social technology for social integration was used to initiate and build relationships between academics and library staff by participants in the Vietnamese case study. Library staff and academics there actively used social technologies for socialisation and organisational promotion (e.g., for new teaching programs or new library services). In many cases, social technologies supported the two groups in networking through social connections and to communicate through social interactions, and were effective in narrowing the traditional gap between them. This successful use of social technology to influence the perception of partners, and to incorporate personal and work relationships, could explain why collaboration at the Vietnamese university often achieved a similar level to its Australian counterpart, even though Vietnamese staff faced more difficulties in terms of access to resources, systems, funding and income. Therefore, the social aspects of technology in the development of an integrated work system to enhance socialisation and collaboration should also be considered in any serious discussion of this question.

The impact of culture on how staff adopted and used technology was evident in both case studies. In some faculties, there was resistance among some academic staff to using technology such as the learning management system or the e-governance system. Neither rules nor procedures were effective in making them change their behaviour, but in the Vietnamese university, the social interaction with organisation’s colleagues on social platforms such as Facebook, or Google Hangouts did motivate more academics to use technology.
Technology use at the Vietnamese university was also dependent on faculty culture and the culture of the faculty leaders. If the faculty leaders were in favour of technology and used technology as the main means of communication, faculty members were more likely to accept and use technology as part of their day-to-day work practices. This interaction can be understood as the organisation’s norms, “the actualisation of rights and the enactment of obligations” (Giddens, 1976, p. 108). This in turn explains the constraining and enabling aspects of power asymmetries upon the actions of faculty staff.

These finding in the cases of the Australian and Vietnamese universities supports aspects of Hofstede (2001) and the Hofstede centre’s (2016a, 2016b) theory of national culture, in which the dimension of Power Distance in Vietnamese culture was indexed higher than their Australian counterpart. Thus, Vietnamese subordinates were more likely to accept and be expected to follow their organisation’s leaders.

### Main insights 7.2

One highlight was the illustration of constitutive interactions between structure and technology, and how these elements had influenced and have been influenced by collaboration practices.

- Both universities lacked an integrated system to support collaboration, which caused disconnection and barriers to staff’s mutual understandings.
- Social technologies played an important role in social interaction and social integration that facilitated building personal and professional relationships, particularly with participants from the Vietnamese university.
- Interaction between academic culture and technology were recognized through the level of resistance to technology among some academic staff. At some faculties of the Vietnamese university, the leader’s use of technology influenced the way that staff interacted with technology.

The next section extends discussion to the socio-cultural dynamics that have shaped the power inequalities between the two groups of academics and library staff, as well as the normative sanctions in organisations, and the impact of temporal and spatial dimensions on their collaboration.

### 7.3 Social culture dynamics

Findings from both case studies showed the influence of social structure alongside differences in cultural aspects and the professional divide between academics and library staff. These structures created and reinforced the perceptions of power asymmetries and cultural norms that influenced collaboration practices of the two groups. The following sub-sections discuss how the perceptions of power, culture, norms, time and space affected the collaborative
interaction of academics and library staff at both Australian and Vietnamese universities (Table 7-3).

Table 7-3: Comparisons of socio-cultural dynamics in the Australian university and the Vietnamese university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITIES</th>
<th>DIFFERENCES</th>
<th>The Australian university</th>
<th>The Vietnamese university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power asymmetries:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Influences of stereotype of librarians as well as how librarians stereotyped themselves.</td>
<td>- Influenced by stereotype of librarians and of being a female-dominated occupation.</td>
<td>- Strongly influenced by stereotype of librarians and of being a female-dominated occupation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Influences of social structure, differences of culture and professional divide between academics and library staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gaps in power and social status between academics and library staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Influences of inequalities of power and social status between academics and library staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Big gaps in power and social status between academics and library staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No academic status for librarians.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work culture:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distinctive values of work culture in collaboration practice at varying levels.</td>
<td>No differences found.</td>
<td>No differences found.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Work culture and norms are shaping and shaped by the interaction of professional identity, governance structure, social norms and contexts as well as emerging actions of participants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time and Space:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Time and space are not only contextual factors, but also determine the building and maintenance of collaborative relationships.</td>
<td>No differences found.</td>
<td>No differences found.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rigid rules of time and space constrain collaborative activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Time and space strongly connected to varying levels of collaboration i.e. coordination, cooperation and collaboration.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of time is an academic norm and a common reason for not getting involved in collaboration.</td>
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</table>
The constraints of socio-cultural dynamics on library collaboration have long been discussed in literature, albeit mostly from a library practitioner’s perspective. This research, in contrast, contributes in-depth insights into the impact of the socio-cultural dynamics on collaboration, from the perspectives of both academics and library staff participants. It also examines how these dimensions were changed due to participants’ efforts in pursuit of more effective collaboration.

7.3.1 Power asymmetry

Action intrinsically involves the application of ‘means’ to achieve outcomes, brought about through the direct intervention of an actor in a course of events, ‘intended action’ being a sub-class of the actor’s doing, or his refraining from doing; power represents the capacity of the agent to mobilise resources to constitute those “means”. (Giddens, 1976, p.110)

The case studies revealed the inequalities of power between the academics and library staff. Academics seemed to have more power in the collaborative relationship since they were typically regarded as having a higher position in society. Librarians, through the nature of their supporting roles, appeared to be viewed as subordinates. This unbalanced power relationship created certain constraints to the way the two groups perceived each other as well as the way they initiated the relationship, communicated and undertook certain actions toward collaboration. Interestingly, the structure of power and social interaction was not stable, but was changed by the actions of library staff and academics to reproduce social rules that influenced their relationships and their actions.

One important example in the discussion of power asymmetry between academics and library staff in Australian and Vietnamese universities was the absence of systems granting academic status and tenure-track for library staff in both countries. These structures have been popular in United States universities. A survey of librarians’ status at fifty universities in the United States showed that 85% of librarians were faculty members. Of these, 85% had tenure-track, and librarians who did not have faculty status have still been recognised for their capability and contribution to teaching, research and service provision of the university (Bolin, 2008).

The critical importance of tenure-track and academic status for librarians has been long advocated by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) because it facilitates faculty members viewing librarians as academic colleagues and research specialists (Goldsmith & Fonseca, 2014).

In Australia, very few librarians hold academic status, apart from the chief librarians of some institutions (before the mid-1980s), and senior librarians at Latrobe University (Doskatsch, 2003). This issue raised an interesting debate about the academic status for librarians. Macauley (2001) found the academic status of librarians only helped to produce collegiality and equal standing with academics if librarians pursued an academic pathway. Doskatsch (2003) argued that the value of academic status to librarians amounted to little more than feeling more obligated. She believed that librarians wanted to contribute to teaching and research but showed less interest in academic status or pursuit of tenure. Evidence of this thesis partially supports Doskatsch (2003) that librarians’ enthusiasm in contributing to
educational activities did not stem from a quest for academic status. However, not all library staff wanted to preserve traditional roles or feared academic obligations. There was evidence from the case studies of competent library staff who were qualified to work in academia. There has also been a growing trend for librarians to undertake higher education and short courses in teaching theory (Bewick & Corrall, 2010; Peacock, 1999). Thus, there should be a pathway to achieve academic status and tenure for librarians who are interested in and capable of teaching and doing research. This should not be obligatory for every librarian, but available, to encourage and recognise outstanding library staff. It could be particularly useful in the case of the Australian university library, since academic skills advisers showed a very high turnover rate, with many of them returning to work in academic positions. As such, granting academic status to relevant library roles could help in promoting the position of librarians while improving academics’ perception of librarians’ roles and narrowing the power divide between academics and library staff.

Another problem causing power asymmetries between the two groups involved the influence of stereotypes about the role of library staff. There still existed traditional perceptions of librarians as guardians of books whose jobs do not go beyond the technical roles of organising and lending library materials. These old, undesirable public images of librarians are still found in films, fiction and social media of many cultures (Micle, 2014; Radford & Radford, 1997; Walter, 2008). Librarianship was also more vulnerable as it has been a female-dominated occupation (Carson & Little, 2014; Radford & Radford, 1997). Radford and Radford claimed that “the form and the voice of the female librarian is a function of a system of power and rationality that is not of her own making” (1997, p. 250). Indeed, the negative impact of the female librarian stereotype seemed greater in the Vietnamese society where women’s work roles were still commonly less appreciated.

The adverse consequences of librarian stereotypes were found not only through the often negative perception of academics about the librarians’ role, but also in the way librarians stereotyped themselves. There were cases of self-defeated librarians who felt less confident about themselves and consequently acted as if they were subordinate to academics. Julien and Pecoskie (2009) found the feeling of being less respected was more likely to be reflected in how librarians perceived themselves than in what academics did. This research also found contrasting views of academics on the position and roles of librarians in academia, and of librarians about the different attitudes of academics toward collaboration. But it is important to note the presence of more positive changes in the way academics and librarians perceive each other. These changes could be explained as the outcome of the collaborative practices as well as the outstanding efforts that librarians have made to enhance their qualifications, knowledge and capabilities.

In addition to the individual efforts of librarians to change their public image, actions from university management in transforming the governance structure and its impact on daily work practice of both academics and library staff should be recognised. For instance, the merger of academic skills advisers, who were academics, into the library in liaison roles has enhanced the capacity of librarians. The complementary academic and teaching skills that academic skills advisers brought into the liaison team helped bridge the gap between academic staff and
Chapter 7 - Discussion

librarians and helped collaboration reach a higher level. Carson and Little (2014) further suggested that actions to change preconceptions about librarianship should involve cultural education, schooling and promotion activities with the support of mass media. The next section discusses the influences of differences in work culture and norms between academics and library staff.

7.3.2 Culture and norms

The literature presents an interesting debate about some of the distinctive constraints upon collaboration caused by particular dimensions of academic culture. Much of the discussion addresses perceptions of librarians about academic culture, without providing justification or insight into the factors that have created and driven these cultural features. This section discusses findings that fill this gap, as well as adding new insights into particular elements of the library culture based upon discussions with both academics and library staff.

This case study research supports Hardesty (1995) who argued that some cultural attributes of academic culture adversely affected collaboration with library staff, including a strong research focus, the high level of autonomy and academic freedom, time constraints and resistance to change. Other cultural dimensions of academics, such as condescending attitudes, ownership of subjects and research territory, inflexibility and limited respect of librarians are also widely discussed in the library literature (Christiansen et al., 2004; Given & Julien, 2005; Hardesty, 1995; Julien & Given, 2013) and were occasionally identified in both case studies. These values were mainly perceived through the reflections of some library staff, rather than being expressed by academic participants. The presence of such cultural values varied amongst academics and faculties but only to a limited extent. There were examples where academics were very respectful and willing to work with librarians or open to suggestions and changes to their courses. It was also evident in the Australian university case that some academic skills advisors (who had previously worked as academics) had unwelcome experiences with academic culture and the professional divide when they worked collaboratively with academics. Thus, librarians should not be too sensitive about particular elements of the academic culture because academics might not purposely discriminate against librarians, and the attitudes of some academics might also be inaccurately perceived by librarians.

Further examination of the work culture at both universities identified factors that underpinned particular cultural features of academic life. Work culture and norms are produced and reproduced through the interactions of social norms, organisational culture and professional identity, and people’s actions in various work and social contexts over time. For instance, cultural norms such as overemphasis on research and high level of autonomy were shaped by the nature of academics’ work as researchers under the governance structure of a university in which research and publications are significantly promoted along with the societal norms of academic freedom. In other words, cultural, structural, and social institutions are interrelated, which both enables and constrains academics when working in certain ways. This case study research supports Saunders (2012) who argues that academics more often have an insufficient understanding of librarians’ roles, rather than aiming to disconnect from librarians or lacking respect for them. It is important to have a good understanding of these distinctive
cultural values as elements of the academic profession, rather than criticising or perceiving them as unhelpful qualities possessed by individuals.

Literature concerning library culture provided little insight into how academics perceived the work culture of their library partners. From the librarians’ perspectives, Chu (1997) and Christiansen et al. (2004) described library culture as highly responsive, enthusiastic and collaborative. This research has confirmed the presence of these cultural aspects from the perspectives of academics and librarians in both the Australian and the Vietnamese universities. Academic participants also revealed their view of elements of library culture: working in a very established way, which is detail focused, and with a more structured framework to ensure collective agreement and approval. These elements caused conflicts when librarians collaborated with academics who displayed more ‘individual’ and ‘outside-the-box’ working styles (see details in sections 5.5 and 6.5). Likewise, a study by Manuel et al. (2005) found librarians’ teaching culture to be very organised and formal in comparison with the less organised and informal teaching style of academics.

These distinctive patterns of library culture could be explained as products of the traditional technical work related to organising books that required adherence to detailed description procedures and cataloguing rules. Cultural elements of librarians such as collective decision-making style or highly structured work regime reflected the nature of their service provision work: a quiet environment, team-work structure, indoor settings, and the common hierarchical governance structure. However, librarianship is a profession in transition, from a focus on collection management to teaching information literacy and external research projects, which would certainly make continuous changes in library culture. It is important that library staff focus on communicating their emerging roles to the wider academic community to increase the latter’s awareness of their role and potential contribution to collaborative practice.

7.3.3 Time and space

As Giddens stated, temporal and spatial contexts influence the nature of social interaction. In collaborative practices between academics and library staff, time and space were not only contextual features, but helped determine the building and maintenance of their relationship. In this research, time and space have been seen as essential elements of social systems, communication, organisational structure, work culture and the personal relationships of collaborators. In other words, these temporal and spatial dimensions exist in every moment of social change and social production of the constitution of social life (Giddens, 1976, 1979, 1984; Lars, 2000).

Initially, time was found to be important for the development of collaborative relationships, particularly between different professions such as academics and library staff. Findings from both the Australian and Vietnamese universities indicated that the outcomes and consequences of changes in the collaborative structure also needed time in order to emerge. Over time, various problems caused by the lack of understanding about partners’ roles, expertise and work culture had been gradually resolved. Collaboration over time contributed
Chapter 7 - Discussion

to the longevity of the collaborative relationship, an important condition leading to high-end collaboration.

The influence of space on collaboration has been one of the most interesting findings in the investigation of levels of collaboration across the faculties and campuses in the Australian case study. Proximity, accessibility, and shared social spaces for face-to-face meetings were factors facilitating social interaction and relationship building. Library participants who worked in small campuses were more likely to have a closer collaborative relationship than their counterparts on larger campuses. However, there were marked exceptions, which emerged from the comparison of one Australian faculty with one Vietnamese faculty, in which both had libraries located at the centre of the main faculty building. The Australian faculty achieved the highest level of collaboration while the Vietnamese faculty was struggling to build this relationship. This was because, apart from the similar advantages of the integrated design of the building, the Australian faculty had a robust collaboration structure, strong management support, highly qualified staff and was more research-oriented than its Vietnamese counterpart. The interplay between space and other enabling factors of collaboration created different patterns of collaboration. Thus, the influences of space on collaboration practice should be studied in conjunction with other social, organisational and personal factors.

Interestingly, space and time also presented constraints to collaboration between academics and library staff because academics have different entitlements concerning their choice of flexible times and places to work, as compared to library staff. These findings support Christiansen et al. (2004) who note the limited choice of time and place to work in the traditional library structure. In light of this, routine work on the service desk, regulations in terms of work time and work space, and the hierarchical reporting system became constraints unless liaison librarians could schedule teaching appointments in advance. Particularly with library staff who worked across libraries and faculties, temporal and spatial constraints have been challenges that they have had to manage all the time. In contrast, tenured and contract academics had more freedom of time and space to work, although casual or sessional academic staff usually had much less flexibility. These latter staff were normally paid for the hours they worked and their extra time to work with librarians might not be remunerated. Such a gap in the university policies discouraged opportunities for interaction between academics and librarians. Thus, to achieve a high level of collaboration, library staff in a liaison role needed to have higher levels of autonomy in utilising their time and work space. By the same token, sessional and casual academics should be paid for the hours they collaborate with library staff.

Further time-based constraints occurred in the daily routines of most academic participants and of some library staff. As discussed earlier, academics today face the increasing pressure of producing more research and publications, heavy teaching workloads and extra administrative work (De Zilwa, 2010; Ferman, 2011; Kenny et al., 2012; Ryan, 2009). Time constraint has become a norm in the academic community. Lack of time was the most common reason for academics not getting involved in collaboration with library staff. In contrast, library staff normally devoted more time to collaboration than their academic peers, so that collaboration accounted for a significant component of their role. However, the issue of library staffing
resource constraints meant that library staff were time-poor since they were taking on multiple roles including library technical work, service provision, teaching information literacy skills, and collaboration.

When time and physical space imposed constraints, participants found that technology became significant in enabling staff to work in digital spaces and thus reduce the dependence on time and space. Working in digital spaces with no restriction on access time has presented enormous opportunities for communication and collaboration. Participants found face-to-face meetings and online interaction to be integral parts of their social interaction. The integration of technology in time and space appears to have extended collaboration and helped to achieve the highest level of collaboration.

Findings from this thesis indicated the strong impact of time and space on the varying levels of collaboration, from coordination to cooperation to collaboration. The main themes of this thesis supported the continuum of collaboration proposed by Yue and Beyerlein (2006), which specified the different extent of these three levels of collaboration from low to high, according to five dimensions of collaboration i.e. social interaction, scope, autonomy, dynamics, and temporality.

Coordination presented limited social interaction, scope, autonomy and dynamics, with minimal time working together. Coordination activities could involve making a reading list, requesting materials or scheduling library classes. In both the Australian and Vietnamese universities, this level of collaboration was the most common. Time constraints were the consequence of the over-crowded curriculum and content-focused teaching approach at both universities. Academic participants claimed that lecture time was insufficient for them to deliver the subject content, leaving no room for in-class collaboration activities. Thus, when time and space imposed constraints, academics and library staff mainly worked independently either in the lecture space or the library space at different times and coordinated things as needed.

The second level – cooperation – involved a greater level of interaction, varied scope, and a moderate level of time and commitment. Participants described different collaboration experiences such as making a subject guide, organising resources for courses and research projects, or developing an information skills program for specific courses. Academics and library staff contributed more time and effort to working together, but still preferred to work in their own time and space. These findings support the work of Montiel-Overall (2005a) and Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh (2006), which showed that participants often fulfil their tasks independently, with some coordination. Cooperation was the second most common form of partnerships across the case studies of this thesis.

The most desirable collaboration model, in the sense of richness, occurs when academics and library staff work together across time and space to achieve a long term goal. Such a partnership presents a high level of trust and commitment, respect for each other’s expertise, and a common understanding. Their social interactions are more complex, with broader scope and a high level of autonomy. At this level, the parties involved are jointly planning, co-
thinking, creating together and participating in the decision-making process (Montiel-Overall, 2005a). A good example of high-end collaboration in this research was found when academics and library staff embedded learning skills into the curriculum and co-delivered the programs directly to students during lecture time. Although this is the highest level of collaboration, it was not common in either of the university case studies.

For all its usefulness, Yue and Beyerlein’s framework does not include the spatiality dimension, which is an inseparable contextual feature of social interaction, as seen in this research. The presence of spatial dimensions varied by levels of collaboration. When coordinating, academics and library staff mostly worked separately; cooperating involved a mixture of shared and individual spaces; collaborating involved more joint activities occurring in a shared space. It is therefore proposed to extend Yue and Beyerlein’s collaboration continuum framework by including a Spatiality dimension to fully accommodate features of collaboration at different levels. In coordination, academics and librarians mostly work in separate spaces. In cooperation, they are more likely to spend sometime working together, so space is viewed as mixed. However, when they collaborate, they work together in a shared space. The shared space at the collaboration level has been denoted in both physical and virtual senses. In physical space, academics and library staff work either in lectures, libraries, faculties or on campuses. In digital space, their collaboration occurs in learning management systems, library systems, online communication platforms or via social networking platforms. The spatial integration enables interaction and serves as an essential element of a successful collaborative relationship.

Main insights 7.3:

Power asymmetries between academics and library staff were reinforced in the production and reproduction of social structures, particularly the exhibition of social, cultural and professional divides. The degree of power asymmetry between academics and library staff was higher in Vietnam due to the stronger influence of stereotypes of librarians and of a female-dominated occupation.

Perceptions of participants about themselves and others were influenced by the differences in academic and library culture. Work culture and norms were shaping and shaped by the interaction of professional identity, governance structure, social norms and contexts as well as emerging actions of participants.

Time and space were strongly connected to the levels of collaboration. Findings about these determining factors in building and maintaining a collaborative relationship suggested the addition of a new dimension of ‘Spatiality’ to the framework of collaboration levels of Yue and Beyerlein (2006).

The next section discusses the centrality of personal dimensions in the decisions and actions of academics and library staff to collaborate, and the extent to which these elements determine the outcomes of collaboration.
7.4 Personal dimensions

Personal characteristics such as personality, trust, personal relationships, and personal perceptions interacted with various elements of collaboration as presented through findings of relevant factors across the Australian and Vietnamese case studies. As can be seen in Table 7-4 (below), the degree to which personal dimensions influenced collaboration were significant in both cases. These personal dimensions are all interrelated and determining factors of participants’ decisions to get involved in a collaborative relationship, as well as their level of commitment throughout the collaboration process (Figure 7-2).

Figure 7-2: Influences of personal dimensions on the collaborative relationship

Trust was the first most important personal element amongst participants. Trust is a “necessary ingredient” for a long-term business partnership because each party needs to trust the reliability and integrity of their partners (Phelps & Campbell, 2012). In this current study, collaboration occurred in both universities when academics and library staff trusted their partners’ knowledge, expertise and professionalism. Since their partnership involved sharing resources and expertise, maintaining and respecting professional integrity was an important condition to generate trust. Collaboration progressed once participants trusted that their partners were not taking over their professional expertise or taking advantages of their partner’s contribution to pursue individual goals.

Librarians at the Vietnamese university faced more challenges in developing trust with academics than their counterparts in the Australian university. From a social perspective, librarians in Vietnam faced a stronger impact of traditional public perceptions of librarians, which was a barrier in building trust in the emerging areas of library expertise such as teaching and research. Senior management failed to support library staff in acquisition decisions around the purchase of course materials requested by faculties, which in turn affected the library’s credibility. Another challenge to the efforts of librarians to raise their status was the absence of the university librarian from the Academic Board and university management team. This lack of involvement in the university’s decision-making process meant less autonomy compared to library participants in the Australian case.
A particular feature of the Australian university was the higher level of autonomy and freedom that library management gave to their staff performing liaison roles. This was important for building trusting relationships among library staff. Library participants stated that their autonomy in making decisions in collaborative activities enabled them to work as equal partners with academics. Thus, this transition from a very structured form of library governance to a more flexible approach enabled librarians to gain respect and trust from their academic partners.

Table 7-4: Comparisons of the influences of personal dimensions on collaboration between the Australian and the Vietnamese universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMILARITIES</th>
<th>DIFFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Australian university</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collaboration occurs when</td>
<td>- Had advantages in building trust with academics since collaboration was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participants trust their partners’</td>
<td>better supported by senior management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge, expertise, professionalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and professional integrity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal relationships:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Australian university</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Socially constructed and developed</td>
<td>- Enhanced by social interactions in proximity and in social spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over time and significantly contribute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the achievement of a successful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaboration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal perceptions:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Australian university</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Perception of the roles, attitudes</td>
<td>- Less influenced by the social status divide between academics and library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and behaviours of partners influence</td>
<td>staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and was influenced by collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practices, social interaction,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work culture, governance systems, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisational environment over time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Australian university</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The most diverse personal element</td>
<td>No differences found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that can either enable or constrain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaboration. This quality influences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and is influenced by social structure,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work culture and personal relationships.</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

The second critical feature that led to successful collaboration was the *personal relationships* between academics and library staff. Participants at both universities argued that relationships at a personal level made the most difference to their collaboration. Personal relationships were developed through social communication and personal team building interactions with elements of trust and mutual understanding of each other’s roles and the nature of their work.
Personal relationships were socially constructed over time and closely connected to the permanency of staff and the social space where participants interacted. Once participants had established strong personal relationships, collaboration became less affected by emerging changes of structures or new management appointments. Personal relationships served as an essential element of a sustainable collaborative partnership.

The third important aspect that influenced the outcome of a collaborative relationship was the personal perceptions embedded in the minds of academics and library staff regarding themselves and their partners. Personal perceptions can be understood as “a set of temporal ordering devices, shaped by, yet shaping, the movement and orientations of the body in the contexts of its behaviour …” (Giddens, 1984, p.47). In both case studies, library staff proved to be more sensitive to academics’ feedback, attitudes and behaviours in response to their actions than the reverse. Often it seemed that librarians stereotyped themselves as being less respected or as subordinate to academics, which was evident in most instances in this research. The personal perceptions of both academics and library staff influenced and were influenced by factors such as the social and governance systems, power asymmetries, professional culture and awareness of the roles that partners played in a collaboration. However, academics seemed to be less informed about the changing role of library staff in supporting academic activities. It was evident that perceptions of individuals changed over the time, particularly with the significant contribution of social technology in communication. Thus, it is imperative to have strategies to raise the awareness of academics about what and how the library can contribute to collaboration.

The final central factor of the personal dimension that influenced the collaborative relationship was the personality of participants. In this research, personality was the most diverse personal element that enabled or constrained collaboration. Apart from the unique quality that each participant carried, participants showed personal characteristics that closely connected with the social structures that they drew upon to act. Personality relates to the social power relations, particular work culture, and organisational environments. This quality varies between individuals and becomes constrained in the presence of clashes of personalities such as between co-operative vs. independent, innovative vs. resistant, quiet vs. outspoken individuals. Overall, these four personal dimensions were both interrelated and important for the success of any collaborative relationship.

Main insights 7.4:

A framework of the influence of personal dimensions on collaborative relationships was developed.

Personal dimensions i.e. trust, personality, personal relationship and personal perceptions, interacted with various elements of collaboration.

Trust in partners’ knowledge, expertise and professionalism facilitated knowledge sharing and respecting each other’s professional integrity.

Personal relationships provided an important ground for initiating and developing collaboration. Personal perceptions were reflected in the way academics and library staff...
perceived themselves and each other. Personality was the most diverse personal element amongst the enablers or constraints upon collaboration.

7.5 **A framework of factors influencing collaboration**

The findings of the Australian university and Vietnamese university case studies highlighted certain differences in structure, system and socio-cultural factors, which influenced collaboration between academics and library staff in each university. The Australian university was more developed in terms of its collaborative structure, infrastructure, resources, budget and technology. This university had a complex and hierarchical organisational structure, and a stronger focus on research. The Vietnamese university structure, on the other hand, was less complex and multi-tiered than its Australian equivalent due to its smaller size. Collaboration was also less structured, thus appearing more ad hoc.

Despite the presence of these different characteristics, collaboration in both university systems had been affected by three factors: organisational governance, socio-cultural systems and the personal attributes of collaborators. These factors meant that the level of collaboration in both universities varied across individuals, libraries, faculties and campuses. In some faculties, the highest level on the collaboration continuum had been achieved, whilst in others, academics and library staff had very limited contact. Both universities experienced similar challenges in building an institution-wide structure for collaboration. The social structures, management, goals, roles, culture, nature of work, time, space and perceptions of academics and library staff influenced their collaboration, whilst their collaborative practices reinforced or changed these systems to enable their interaction in particular contexts.

From the application of the theoretical lenses of Giddens’ structuration theory and Orlikowski’s duality of technology theory in the current research, a framework of factors influencing collaboration has been constructed. This framework has three main structural factors that influence collaboration between academics and library staff: (i) governance structure, (ii) socio-cultural dynamics, and (iii) personal dimensions (See Figure 7-3). The governance structure factor comprises four elements: organisational management, roles, resources and communication. The socio-cultural dynamics factor comprises three elements: power, social and cultural norms, and time and space. The personal dimension factors comprises four elements: trust, personal relationship, perceptions and personality.
As discussed earlier, these factors are all interrelated and influence each other, such that there was sometimes no clear border between the three factor groups. The framework illustrates the interrelationship between these structural elements, how they enable and constrain the collaborative interaction of participants, and how participants’ actions reproduced such structures. The following sections discuss the interconnections of these elements in detail.

i. The interconnection of *Governance structure and Socio-cultural dynamics*: The structures of organisations are social systems that humans have constructed based on social institutions and cultural systems embedded. These social systems are continually evolving and influencing collaborative activities, with power asymmetries either reinforced or changed across time and space. These social systems enable participants to reproduce and reinforce their work culture and norms through their day-to-day collaboration practices. In other words, individual practices are shaped by organisational and social power relationships, norms or behaviours and meaning, and in turn shape these structures (Jones & Karsten, 2008). It is worth emphasising that one factor may be simultaneously enabling for one group and constraining for another, depending on the group’s current position within the social system.

Another structural property pertains to the role of technology in library–academic collaboration. People’s interaction with technology is structured by institutional rules.
and resources and their actions and reactions to technology contribute to the shape of institutional structures. In the age of the digital library, electronic links overcome the problem of distance and enable access from anywhere, and at any time. While Giddens emphasised the importance of direct physical interaction face-to-face, he also acknowledged the role that technology plays in enabling the extension of social systems in space and time (Giddens, 1979). Taking this even further, Orlikowski (1992a) argues that technology has changed the way people communicate with others by facilitating their online interaction while constraining the opportunities for physical interaction. The importance of face-to-face communication and ongoing personal interaction in developing mutual understanding, commitment and motivation seem critical for effective collaborative partnerships. Direct interpersonal interaction is most crucial in the early stages of a collaborative relationship, and electronic communication devices facilitate continuity in established relationships, whilst overcoming the barriers of distance and time zones.

ii. The interconnection of Socio-cultural dynamics and Personal dimensions: The interconnection between social-cultural dynamics and personal dimensions is perceived through instances in which power asymmetry and cultural differences impact upon collaboration between academics and library staff. The causes of power unevenness are mainly due to the influence of rules and structure on different groups, the status divide between academics and library staff, and their distinctive individual personalities. Power asymmetry has caused personal conflicts, dissatisfaction about unequal relationships, and perceptual barriers among participants who aimed to form the partnership, or to move toward a highest level of collaboration.

Another significant characteristic of power was the perceived competence and knowledgeability of individuals, which was important for building respect and trust within a collaborative partnership. One example of this was the increasingly diverse skill base of academic skills advisors from once being mainly (English) ‘language and learning’ teachers, to now having an academic base in a particular discipline. Giddens argued that the outcome of actions depends on the capability of the individual to “make a difference”, to be in a position to exercise power and to influence others (Giddens, 1984, 14). The success of a collaborative venture was strongly affected by individual characteristics of participants. As mentioned earlier, the nature of the personal relationship between participants was crucial. For this, well-developed interpersonal and communication skills were essential, as were personalities that meshed well.

Relationship-building over time is fundamental; collaborations do not occur without mutual trust and respect of the involved parties. Working in close proximity to others, or interacting in common spaces, increases the likelihood of developing personal working relationships that seem critical for effective collaborative partnerships, even if this may appear anomalous in the age of the digital library, where electronic links can overcome the problems of distance and enable access to the library ‘anywhere, anytime’.
iii. The interconnection of *Personal dimensions and Governance structure*: Perceived role demands, management support, organisational communication and individual factors such as perceived knowledgeability, personality, attitude and behavioural characteristics influence the decision about whether or not to participate in, or to continue in, a collaborative partnership. Policies about collaboration may be crafted by university leaders, but how collaboration actually evolves is much more ad hoc. There were no established structures or rules that were effective in setting up all collaborative partnerships. There existed very different patterns of collaboration both between library staff and academics across faculties and with different academics in one faculty. Each partnership tended to evolve at the grass-roots level, and in quite different ways. Effective collaboration does not simply happen by management edict, but through the development of personal understanding and respect for each other’s knowledge, skills and expertise which is built up between partners over time.

Overall, this theoretical framework of collaboration can contribute to the body of knowledge by bringing a richer understanding of the interaction of structural, social, cultural, organisational, professional and technological factors and how these elements influence collaboration practices between academics and library staff.

### 7.6 The usefulness and limitations of structuration theory and the duality of technologies theory

In this thesis, structuration theory and the duality of technology theory have provided lenses for examining the influences of social, organisational, cultural and technological structures on collaboration practice at both universities. The central concern of structuration theory and the duality of technology theory is the on-going interplay between structure and agency. The dualism of ‘individuals’ and ‘society’ has been reconceptualised as the duality of ‘agency’ and ‘structure’. Social phenomena should be studied from both epistemological and ontological perspectives. Individuals’ actions structure society and are in turn structured by society through social practice. In this research, such theoretical lenses have been particularly helpful in studying: first, the impact of changes in organisational structure; second, social relations of power with professional and cultural divides between academics and library staff; and third, the influence of technology on collaborative practice.

These theories have been a useful guide for this study of the contextual factors that influence the collaborative relationships between academics and library staff. However, both theories have presented some limitations in elucidating personal elements that are also important when studying the collaborative relationship. The two theories are discussed in the following section.

#### 7.6.1 Structuration theory

Giddens emphasised that social systems are constituted by regularised social practices:
We should see social life not just as society out there or just the product of the individual here, but as a series of on-going activities and practices that people carry on, which at the same time reproduce larger institutions. (Giddens and Pierson, 1998, p. 76)

The influence of structuration theory in studying the dynamism of social practice has been recognised by Berends et al. (2003), Jones and Karsten (2008) and Rosenbaum (2010). The theoretical lenses of recurring interplay between structures and practice allowed the researcher to grasp the dynamic flow of social interactions and structure. In the light of this, the dynamic changes in organisational structure and social practices and how these influence each other were explored. The theory also facilitated the discovery of the complex nature of a collaborative relationship, particularly different collaboration patterns that are mediated by the interplay of social relationships of power, financial resources, distinctive cultural values, and norms.

Studying collaboration as a structuration process from two levels of analysis (i.e., both a broader view of social systems and participants’ actions) has yielded useful insights. At the broader level, both universities exhibited significant changes in their organisational structures and management strategies that directly influenced work practices and the interaction of academics and library staff. At the individual level, each participant group drew upon current procedures, norms and resources to act, with their actions in turn reinforcing or altering these structures.

Exploring how structure enables and constrains practices, as well as how practices influence and transform the structure, has provided insights into the causes, consequences and outcomes of human actions. “The constraining aspects of power are experienced as sanctions of various kinds . . . One person’s constraint is another’s enabling” (Giddens, 1984, p.175). This constraint/enablement relation helped the analysis of power asymmetries from the perspective of academic skills advisers and liaison librarians of the Australian university. For instance, academic skills advisers found that the merger of their academic language teaching unit with the library blurred their roles under the umbrella structure of the library, whilst librarians found this restructure had leveraged their role and made a greater contribution to the library partnership with academics.

Giddens’ theory emphasises that human actors are knowledgeable agents who are capable of utilising or controlling resources. In the theory of structuration, resources are categorised into two forms: “allocative resources refer to capabilities to forms of transformative capacity – generating command over objects, good or material phenomena; authoritative resources refer to types of transformative capacity generating command over persons or actors” (Giddens 1984, p.33). Power over others forms and is formed by the capabilities of actors in utilising resources to influence the conduct of other individuals or groups. This concept is particularly useful in exploring causes and consequences of structural divide between academics and library staff. An example of its utility can be found in the analysis of situations where senior academics or larger faculties of the Vietnamese university were able to use the library’s
acquisitions budget to buy materials for faculties without having attained agreement from librarians (see further details in section 6.4.1).

The researcher supports the observation of Walsham (2002) and Myers and Avison (2002) that overall Giddens’ theory provided a more explicative approach for studying organisational culture and norms than the cultural theory of Hofstede (1980, 2001). In structuration theory, cultural values are conceptualised as shared meaning systems in relations with power, norms and knowledgeable of participants. This theoretical conceptualisation has led to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics and professional culture and norms of academics and library staff, than would have been obtained using the five dimensions of national culture of Hofstede’s theory.

For example, academic culture emphasised a more independent working style and individualistic focus. This could be explained as the consequence of a separate social structure, the independent nature of doing research and teaching within the academic role, and the pressure of producing publications each year while having to achieve good ratings in teaching evaluations. Librarians’ culture, on the other hand, was in transition from a technical role to a more academic-oriented profession, albeit one still affected by the librarian stereotype. This made librarians more susceptible to the perception and behaviours of their academic partners within collaborative practices. They were classified as professional staff, in a service provider or service delivery oriented role, and this in turn affected both the way that they were perceived by academics, and the way that they saw themselves. Thus, studying a social phenomenon through the lens of structuration theory enabled the discovery of findings that laid bare the interplay of power, organisational structures and professional cultures from both ontological and epistemological perspectives. Nonetheless, Hofstede’s theory was useful for understanding power distance as seen in the influence of the leader’s culture on subordinates of the Vietnamese university (see details in section 6.5.1). This theory however, did not help explain the similarities and differences of academics’ and librarians’ cultures, the interaction of the two cultures in an organisation or the impact of dynamic changes of these cultures on collaboration practice. Hofstede explained that his work focuses on comparing work culture of employees of the same occupation and the differences in their national culture (Hofstede, 1984).

Giddens underlined the importance of time and space as structural elements that ‘bind’ in a social system as ‘systemic form’ and exist in its instantiations of social practices. These concepts have significant implications in understanding collaboration practice between academics and library staff. Giddens believed that day-to-day interaction “generalised motivational commitment to the integration of habitual practices across time and space” (Giddens, 1984, p.64). Time and space existed in the co-presence of academics and librarians in various day to day interactions. Their routine interaction over time contributed to the transformation of social relationships and social integration.

Another important aspect of structuration theory is that Giddens positioned all actors relationally in their time-space paths as social positions. A social position can be specified as “a social identity” that holds definite prerogatives and obligations of an actor. These privileges
and obligation constitute and prescribe the roles of the actors (Giddens, 1984, p.84). This concept guided the researcher’s own analysis of roles, professional identity, social status and professional divide between academics and library staff. Academics were in well recognised positions, and possessed higher status than librarians in each university. They were provided with more privileges and academic entitlements than library staff. The status gap between the two professions consequently created boundaries in the perceptions of roles and identity in each group, which were in turn reflected in their social interaction (see further details in sections 5.4.2 and 6.4.2).

However, like Adam (1990), this research has demonstrated that Giddens’ conceptualisation of time and space has neglected its relationship with power. Adam believed that time and space should be conceptualised as resources that can be utilised and deployed in social life. As can be seen in both the Australian and the Vietnamese universities, time and space were important resources that participants were able to utilise to different degrees. Academics had a higher level of autonomy in terms of managing their time and place to work than library staff. Time and space became allocative resources; actors have the capabilities to generate command over such resources. For example, in collaborative practices, working together in academics’ time and space (i.e., collaborative teaching in lecture time and lecture theatres) was seen as one of the most effective forms of library collaboration. But to do that, librarians needed to arrange their work routines to fit in with the time and space where academics worked. Academics decided where and when to collaborate. In other words, time and space were manipulated by academics, which shows the power domination of academics in social practices with library staff.

This research substantiated some criticisms of structuration theory for its overemphasis on ontology rather than epistemology (Phipps, 2001; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2005; Rose & Scheepers, 2001; Silva, 2007). The ontological philosophies of mutual constitutions of structure and agency made data analysis of structure and action inseparable (Jones 2008). Human actors base their interaction on their existing knowledge of the world, their capabilities and social rules of conduct. Their interaction carries intentions, meanings, power and consequences that lead to changes in the structures that govern their actions. Analysing structural properties of social systems that influence actions as well as the actions that exhibit structural properties is an empirical challenge. This encounter was, however, minimised if the data analysis was made from both the institutional (structure) level as well as the agency (action) level, and the research focused on the on-going changes of the structure as outcomes and consequences of interactions between structure and actions. For example, examining the professional culture of the two groups in terms of structure revealed particular cultural values of academics and librarians i.e., independent vs. collaborative and ‘outside the box’ vs. ‘inside the box’, respectively. Then, studying the influences of these cultural norms in terms of participants’ actions facilitated deeper explanations of how and why participants situated themselves or behaved in particular contexts (see details in sections 5.5 and 6.5).

Giddens’ theory has given little account of the personal relationship between individuals and how this relationship contributes to the transformation of structure and social practices. Giddens used his stratification model to describe the reflexivity of individual action and
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distinguished three levels of an actor’s knowledge: unconscious cognition, practical consciousness (tacit knowledge) and discursive consciousness (explicit knowledge). Although this model can be used for analysing actors’ capability to articulate the rules and resources that they base their actions on, and interactions between structure and agency, it does not help in elucidating interactions between participants as agents. In this research, interaction at individual level, trust, personality of participants exerted a significant impact on the perceptions, intentions and the level of participants’ involvement in collaboration (see details in sections 5.8 and 6.8).

Although Giddens placed technology within the category of allocative resources, indicating the commanding role over material artefacts, the influence of technology on human social activities is inadequately addressed in his formulation (Jones & Karsten, 2008; Orlikowski, 1991; Rose & Scheepers, 2001). To narrow this gap, the duality of technology theory (Orlikowski, 1992a) has been utilised widely among information system researchers to study the implications of technology within daily work practice. The next section discusses the utility of Orlikowski’s theory and its shortcomings in the context of this research.

7.6.2 The duality of technology theory

In this thesis, Orlikowski’s duality of technology theory has provided an important complementary theoretical view to structuration theory, in exploring the interplay of social structures and technology and how these interactions influenced and were influenced by collaborative practice. Specifically, her theoretical lens has contributed to the elucidation of the interaction of organisational structure, technology and people. The impact of the interplay between organisational structure and technology in collaboration practice of academics and library staff can be seen through their interaction with technology for daily work practices and in how the organisational structure influenced their use of technology for collaborative activities, as well as in the consequences of technological constraints.

A good example of this interrelationship can be seen in the lack of an integrated work platform for academics and library staff working together. This was caused by the absence of a resourcing framework for technology development and application, the unavailability of a technological solution for collaboration between academics and library staff, and the varying levels of individual interest in using communication technology at both universities. As a consequence, their shared resources were managed in different systems, so that a lot of unnecessary extra work was created for both groups. Moreover, the separate systems that academics and library staff worked within formed an invisible boundary between these two communities.

Another notable aspect of Orlikowski’s theory lay in its usefulness for analysing the influences of technology development on the collaboration activities. Various technologies have been utilised for communication, learning and teaching activities, system management, knowledge sharing and transfer, and social networking. Technology interacted with organisational structure and culture, which created different choices and ways of interaction with technologies. For example, at the Australian university, communication technologies played an important role in promoting professional development and knowledge sharing between
academics and library staff. But in the Vietnamese university, the social technologies crucially contributed to building personal and work relationships between the academics and library staff, which in turn opened up more opportunities for collaboration activities, and for the achievement of a sustainable collaborative relationship.

Application of Orlikowski’s theory when examining conditions and consequences of interaction with technology and associated cultural factors also yielded important findings. There have been challenging circumstances that organisations and individuals faced when working with technology. The first condition emphasised the need to build a sharing culture within organisations to encourage knowledge transfer via collaborative technologies. The second condition necessitated the adequate functionality and usability of technology along with time availability for learning and using technology. In addition, interaction with technology had consequences related to resistance to using technology, excessive time and effort required to work with technology, and privacy issues (see details in sections 5.6 and 6.6).

The duality of technology theory has enabled the researcher to elucidate the impact of structure and technology on participants' actions from different social, cultural, and organisational contexts. Orlikowski emphasises the influence of institutional properties such as knowledge, norms or resources on how people interact with technology and how their interaction implies changes in institutional structure. She seems, however, to give little account to the interaction of participants at the individual level when they work with technology and the ways in which their relationships influence the use of technology. These personal dimensions have strong implications for the use of technology for collaboration purposes. For instance, in the Vietnamese university, social technologies facilitated networking and the building personal and professional relationships. These relationships not only helped initiate and develop collaborative relationships, but also enabled participants to overcome technological issues that could arise in collaborative activities (see details in section 6.6.3).

In summary, Orlikowski’s theory provides a useful theoretical basis for examining influences of structure and technology on collaboration, as well as understanding the conditions and consequences of using technology in altering the governing structures. The theory would further help enrich the study of collaboration if it also incorporated the importance of technology in enhancing personal interaction, and addressed how this interaction could influence changes of institutional structures, technology and collaboration outcomes.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has compared findings regarding the factors influencing collaboration at the Australian and Vietnamese universities, and positioned these findings in the context of the current literature. In the light of this, four groups of factors, have been identified: (i) the influence of the governance structure of the universities on collaboration; (ii) the interplay of technology and structure, and how these mediated communication and interaction of participants; (iii) the socio-cultural dynamics in the interactions of participants in different contexts; and (iv) the determinant role of personal characteristics in the intention and involvement in collaboration.
Collaboration at the Vietnamese university was more ad hoc, less structured and supported, and narrower in scope than in the Australian case. Librarians faced greater challenges concerning: the gap in social positions and professional divide with academics; lower levels of organisational autonomy; lower development of system infrastructure, technology and library resources; and severe budget constraints. Their collaboration therefore was less effective than the Australian counterpart.

However, collaboration at both universities encountered the absence of an institution-wide supporting structure, staffing constraints, an inadequate communication structure, an imbalanced resourcing structure to support collaboration, as well as the need for system integration to enable online collaboration activities. Furthermore, differences in work culture, personality and personal relationship of participants also played an important role in shaping the possibilities of collaboration.

The discussions of the findings in Chapters 5 and 6 enrich understanding of the nature of collaborative relationships, and elaborate on factors that constitute different forms of collaboration in different social, cultural and educational contexts. As a result, a collaboration framework that conceptualised the main influencing factors of collaboration was constructed. Implications for theory and practice of the framework are discussed in the next chapter.

The final section of the chapter evaluated the usefulness and limitations of structuration theory and the duality of technology theory in studying the impact of organisational structure; social relations of power with professional and cultural divides between academics and library staff, and the roles of technology and personal dimensions in collaboration practice.

The next chapter concludes this research by elucidating the key research findings, suggestions for future research, and the implications for theory and practice.
8 Conclusions and implications

This research aimed to investigate the collaborative relationship between academics and librarians, and the challenges encountered by them in the university environment. The objectives of the research were: (i) to identify characteristics of collaborative relationships between academics and librarians, and to differentiate between more and less effective forms of collaboration in different situations and contexts; (ii) to elucidate the factors that constrain and enable collaboration between academics and librarians, including the role of socio-cultural factors, professional boundary, information technology and other factors; (iii) and to develop a theoretical framework of collaboration between academics and librarians.

In the light of this, the investigation has been conducted as an interpretive qualitative case study research, using data collected from an Australian university and a Vietnamese university.

This section draws together the findings in order to address the main research question: “How do academics and library staff collaborate, and how can the features, influences and outcomes of such collaborative relationships be theorised?” by answering the following four research sub-questions:

1. What are the characteristics of collaborative relationships between academics and library staff?
2. How effective are different forms of collaboration in particular situations and contexts?
3. Which contextual factors influence the collaborative relationships between academics and library staff? In particular,
   a. How do socio-cultural factors and professional boundaries affect the collaboration?
   b. How can information technology facilitate or constrain collaboration?
4. How useful are structuration theory and duality of technology theory in elucidating the collaborative relationship between academics and library staff?

8.1 Revisiting research findings

This section summarises and elucidates the findings from chapters 5, 6 and 7.

8.1.1 What are the characteristics of collaborative relationships between academics and library staff?

Collaboration is defined as an educationally innovating process among academics, librarians and other relevant parties who provide a high degree of commitment in working together for the enhancement of teaching, learning and research experiences in the university community. Key aspects of this collaborative relationship involve participants, processes, relationships,
structures, rules, resources, power and autonomy, technologies, expertise and knowledge, culture and norms, behaviours, personality, awareness, commitment, and expectations.

Participants in collaboration varied between universities but primarily involved academics, librarians, academic skill advisers, study and course advisers, unit coordinators, tutors, administrators, and senior management. Their collaboration process highlighted partnerships in three main areas: client services and skills development education, resources development and management, and research partnership. Collaboration in client services and skills education was the most targeted area where academics interacted with library staff to develop and deliver skills development classes for students, e.g., information literacy and study skills teaching sessions. Resources development and management was the conventional area of collaboration where academics worked with library staff to support library acquisitions and the management of relevant course materials such as reading lists, subject guides or teaching and research collections. The third collaboration context, research partnership, was less common than the others but has started to gain more attention from library staff because it seemed to be of interest to academics.

Collaboration was influenced by structural, technological, socio-cultural and personal factors. Structural factors related to the impact of organisational structures and changes, the differences between the roles of academics and library staff, and organisational resources and facilities. Technological factors involved the interactions between structures, participants and technology, and how these interactions mediate collaboration practice. Socio-cultural dynamics shaped power asymmetry, differences of work culture, social positions of participants and elements of time and space in collaboration practices. The final but most significant influencing factor was personal features including the perceptions of academics and library staff toward the roles of their partners, the trust and respect of the partners’ expertise, the personality of each participant and their personal relationships. These four sets of factors are all interrelated and interact, in turn influencing and being influenced by collaborative practices.

Outcomes of collaboration contributed to the universities’ common goals and objectives such as improving graduate attributes, complying with educational qualification standards, restructuring courses, developing information skills for students, developing a blended learning approach, implementing new technologies, and university research programs and projects. Such collaboration entailed a considerable amount of exertion, work, and determination, mutuality and norms, knowledge sharing and respect of each other’s expertise and professionalism.

In the case of the Australian university, the degree of collaboration between academics and library staff varied between participants, libraries, faculties and campuses, but was more structured than at the Vietnamese university. The university was larger in size, and more developed in terms of infrastructure, resources, and technology, with higher staff income. It had a very complex and hierarchical organisational structure, and a stronger focus on research. The actual collaboration practices, however, encountered structural challenges and various barriers that needed to be addressed.
The university in Vietnam, on the other hand, had been challenged by the vision of transforming its teaching and learning approach as well as enhancing overall quality and performance. Issues of bureaucratic structure, traditional management styles, insufficient budgets, teacher-centred learning approaches, a rigid curriculum, inadequate learning resources and lack of skilled staff were significant. There has been a growing need to develop information literacy skills and information research skills for students; however, the roles of librarians in working with academics in such an educational process have been less established than at their Australian counterpart.

8.1.2 How effective are different forms of collaboration in particular situations and contexts?

Effective forms of collaboration occurred when supported by five factors, i.e., strong faculty-library collaboration structures, the organisation’s resource frameworks, collegial relationships, staff expertise, and individuals’ willingness to collaborate. Firstly, a strong faculty-library collaboration structure involved the participation of library staff in the highest committee levels of the faculty so that they were integrated in faculty decision-making processes regarding learning and teaching practice. Secondly, an organisation’s resourcing framework was essential to support implementation of collaborative policies and activities. Thirdly, building collegial relationships laid the ground for achieving a successful and sustainable collaboration. Also, designing social spaces to enhance interaction between academics and library staff could facilitate relationship building. Fourth, success in collaboration was largely the result of the expertise and knowledgeability of participants, because staff capabilities and professionalism created trust. Last but not least, individuals’ willingness to collaborate – including personal relationships, personality, personal perception and trust – was a determining factor in making collaboration happen.

In both universities, collaboration with academics in teaching skills development during the timetabled lectures and tutorials and in the lecture spaces was one of the most effective patterns of collaboration that helped students achieve a high standard of academic performance. These timetabled teaching sessions, which were called embedded classes, provided greater opportunities to collaborate within the dynamic teaching contexts and to support students with more tailored instruction. In these instances, library staff were regarded as teaching colleagues who had equal footing with academics.

Collaboration at the Australian university was more effective in regard to their structured collaborative approach, with an assigned liaison library staff team working with all faculties of the university. Each team worked with academics from specific disciplines, so that teaching collaborative activities was more subject-oriented. Collaboration at the Vietnamese university, on the other hand, was more unstructured since it was mostly based on personal relationships between library staff and academics. The library assigned liaison library staff to work with faculties based on their relationships, rather than on the faculty’s disciplinary focus.
8.1.3 Which contextual factors influence the collaborative relationships between academics and library staff?

Collaboration between academics and library staff in both universities has markedly improved over time, highlighting the important change in the structure and contribution of information technology. However, their collaboration process has been influenced by the structural, social, cultural, technological and personal factors, i.e., (i) the governance structure of the organisation; (ii) power asymmetry regarding roles, the level of autonomy, authority, and professional identity of participants; (iii) the socio-cultural dynamics of the academic group and the library staff group, including spatial and temporal dimensions; (iv) the influence of technology upon collaboration; and (v) personal dimensions of participants, including personal relationship, personality, personal perception and trust.

(i) Governance structure of the organisation

The current university governance systems lacked an institution-wide focus, development strategies and action plans for collaboration. There was little in the way of intersecting structures, shared missions or tasks that required library staff and academics to work together. The universities provided an imbalanced resourcing structure to support the implementation of collaboration frameworks and policies. Strategies for developing collaboration were insufficient, since libraries focused on collaboration in teaching rather than research, while faculties displayed a more research-focused orientation. Moreover, academics and library staff both faced challenges in terms of multiple roles, particularly in the case of the academics. Levels of collaboration therefore varied according to academics, faculties, libraries and campuses, but success was mainly based on relationships between participants. On the other hand, there were constant changes in the universities’ governance structure over the time, which both enabled and constrained collaboration (see details in sections 5.2, 6.2 and 7.1.)

The organisational structure of collaboration between academics and library staff appeared unequal, since libraries placed a strong focus on collaboration, whilst faculties did not. Librarians have made exceptional efforts to establish a balanced relationship, including focusing on resource development strategies, developing faculty specific liaison teams, changing library staffing structures, transitioning librarians’ role from collection management to a teaching and research focus, and using communication and social technologies to promote themselves. Faculty members, on the other hand, worked hard to meet increasing key performance criteria for research, publications and teaching standards, meaning that collaboration with library staff was not a priority for academics. Very few faculties had appointed academics or administrative staff to coordinate work with libraries, leading to a lack of communication between faculties and libraries.

The two universities operated separate job classification systems for ‘academic staff’ and ‘professional staff’. Academics and librarians thus had different income rates, incentives, privileges and promotion ladder. The entitlement system for academic staff was situated at a higher level than that for professional staff. This divide has created issues of power asymmetry, influencing in turn the perceptions of academics and library staff about each other’s roles and position in their collaborative relationship.
There were certain differences in terms of the governance structures of the two universities, which in turn produced differences in collaborative practice at each. The Australian university structure was more complex and hierarchical but also more dynamic and more research focused. The library and faculties had a high level of autonomy in the organisation’s decision-making process. The library had representatives within senior management committees and faculty committees, and library collaboration was more structured, with the joint participation of academic skills advisers. By contrast, the Vietnamese case was less complex but rigidly bureaucratic, while also being more teaching focused. Both the library and faculties had a low level of organisational autonomy. Library collaboration was less structured. The Vietnamese university also had more severe budgetary constraints, as well as low salary scales for both academics and library staff.

(ii) Power asymmetry regarding roles, the level of autonomy, authority, and professional identity of participants

Power asymmetry occurred between academics and library staff, but varied in its degree across universities, faculties, libraries and between individuals. The causes were mainly due to the impact of rules and structures on different groups, work pressure arising from limited staffing, the status divide between the academic and professional groups, the particular knowledgeability and expertise of each group, their distinctive job entitlements, and the priority each gave to collaboration.

The association of asymmetry of power with time and space were found in different levels of autonomy that academics and library staff were entitled. Academics possessed a higher degree of autonomy in terms of managing their time and place to work compared to library staff. Librarians needed to arrange their work routine to fit in with the time and work space where academics worked. Time and space became resources and were manipulated by academics, which exhibited the power domination of academics in social practices with library staff.

Power asymmetry has caused personal conflicts, confusion as to the scope of practice, changes in professional identity, dissatisfaction about unequal relationships, and perceived barriers between participants aiming to form a partnership or move toward further collaboration.

Power asymmetry between academics and library staff was reinforced in the production and reproduction of social structures, particularly the exhibition of social, cultural and professional divides. The degree of asymmetry was higher in Vietnam due to the larger status gap between academics and librarians in the university, and the stronger influence of stereotypes concerning librarians as a female-dominated profession in the society. However, the persistent effort of librarians in demonstrating their capabilities and expertise, as well as building relationships with academics, changed the structure there and in turn improved levels of collaboration.
(iii) The impact of socio-cultural dynamics of the academic group and the library staff group including effects of the spatial and temporal dimensions

At both universities, the perceptions of participants about themselves and their partners were affected by differences in academic culture and library culture. Work culture and norms shape and are shaped by the interaction of professional identity, governance structure, social norms and contexts, as well as the emergent actions of participants.

Differences in work culture between academics and librarians could create frustration. Academic culture emphasised a more independent working style and individualistic focus. Academics generally had a strong feeling of ownership of the subject they taught, so that suggestions to make changes to the content could be less supported. They had more freedom in decision-making and flexibility in terms of time and space to work. Library culture was considered as more collaborative and responsive, but also more structured and detail-focused, emphasising the value of collective decisions and teamwork. When collaborating, such contrasting values of one group’s culture were perceived as problematic by the other. Thus, any success in collaboration was strongly dependent upon characteristics of individuals, and the personal relationships between them.

In comparison with the Australian university, the work culture of both academics and library staff in the Vietnamese university was more strongly influenced by leaders’ work culture. The leaders could create either an individualistic or a collaborative environment. Different management styles presented by the university leaders (either the Western or Asian work culture) shaped the work practice of their subordinates (see details in section 6.5.1). The interaction of different cultures within the same organisation created dynamic changes in the work environment and in turn changed the way members interacted in their daily practices.

Studying the dynamism of work culture between academics and library staff showed close relations to elements of time and space. Time and space were not only contextual features, but were essential factors in building and maintaining personal relationships. In both universities, academic and library participants encountered issues related to a lack of time for collaboration. With library staff, the reasons were due mainly to organisational factors such as staffing shortages, while time constraints among academics were caused by a range of social, organisational, professional and personal factors.

Time and space served as essential elements within social systems, communication, organisational structures, work cultures and the personal relationships between collaborators. These elements were strongly connected to the levels of collaboration. Both academic and librarian participants encountered issues related to a lack of time. While time became one of the most important factors determining the intention and decision of participants to be involved in a collaborative activity, other aspects such as proximity, accessibility, and shared social spaces for face-to-face meetings facilitated social interaction and relationship building. Library participants who worked on small campuses were more likely to have a closer collaborative relationship than their counterparts in large campuses.
(iv) **The influences of technology on collaboration**

Along with power asymmetry and different work cultures, the influence of technology on collaboration was important in mediating the interactions of academics and library staff. The development of technology and the proliferation of online resources have significantly changed the way academics use the library. Although these developments limit opportunities for face-to-face interaction, technology has undeniably created various possibilities for communication and interaction in digital spaces.

The types of technology use varied from emails for daily communication, to Google applications for teamwork, to a “sharing space” in a learning management system, to an advanced application of technology in creating interactive materials to institutional repositories for knowledge sharing. For relationship building in Vietnam, social technologies played a particularly important role in social interaction and social integration, which facilitated building personal and professional relationships.

Levels of technology used for collaborative activities differed between staff members, groups, faculties and campuses, and was affected by the distance between collaborators, personal interest, and the degree of collaboration. The absence of an institutional wide structure for collaboration between faculties and the library affected the role of technology in collaboration, and to some extent, extended the academic-professional divide. For example, library staff and academics mostly worked with separate technology platforms, which could cause miscommunication of the partners’ roles and lack of understanding about each other’s work. Hence, it is critical to have greater coordination across the isolated systems in order to establish seamless integration of the library management and learning management systems.

Interaction between academic culture and technology was recognized in some faculties of the Australian university where a number of tenured academic staff presented a higher level of resistance to technology. Nevertheless, the influence of a leader’s use of technology in certain faculties of the Vietnamese university has been more significant in the way organisation staff interact with technology.

(v) **Personal dimensions of participants, including personal relationship, personality, personal perception and trust**

Personal dimensions had repercussions for the perceptions, intentions and choices of academics and library staff in terms of collaboration. Collaboration happened more successfully at the personal level rather than through formal procedures or arrangements. The success of collaboration was again confirmed as strongly depending on characteristics of the individuals and the personal relationships between participants. Trust in partners’ knowledge, expertise and professionalism facilitated knowledge sharing and respect for each other’s professional integrity. Personal relationships provided an important ground for initiating and developing collaboration. Personal perceptions were reflected in the way academics and library staff perceived themselves and perceived their partners. Personality was a most diverse personal element that could become an enabler or a constraint of collaboration in the presence of clashes of personalities between participants.
The degree of personal relationships varied significantly, depending on various factors such as the personality of individuals, their positions and opportunities for social interaction, working in close proximity to others or interpersonal and communication skills of participants.

Although the degree to which personal dimensions influenced collaboration was significant in both universities, librarians at the Vietnamese university faced more challenges in developing trust with academics than their counterparts in the Australian university. From a social perspective, librarians in Vietnam were handicapped by traditional public perceptions of librarians, which was a barrier to building academics’ trust in emerging areas of library expertise such as teaching and research. Senior management failed to support library staff in acquisition decisions to purchase course materials requested by faculties, which in turn affected the library’s credibility. Another challenge in promoting the librarians’ role in the Vietnamese university was the absence of the university librarian on the Academic Board and university management team. Their lack of involvement in the university’s decision-making process meant less autonomy than library participants in the Australian case.

8.1.4 How useful are structuration theory and duality of technology theory in elucidating the collaborative relationship between academics and library staff?

Giddens’ structuration theory and Orlikowski’s duality of technology theory have provided useful guidance for this study of the contextual factors bound up with the collaborative relationships between academics and library staff. The theories provided lenses for examining the influences of social, organisational, structural, cultural, and technological factors on collaboration practice.

From a social perspective, the theoretical lens of the recurring interplay between structures and practice enabled the researcher to grasp the dynamic changes in social practices, and the complex nature of a collaborative relationship, particularly different collaboration patterns that are mediated by the interplay of social power relationships, financial resources, distinctive cultural values, and norms.

From an organisational perspective, structuration theory helped to explain how organisational structure enabled and constrained practices, as well as how practices influenced and transformed the structure. This theory gave insights into the causes, consequences and outcomes of human actions, which were helpful in studying changes in organisational structures and management strategies that directly influenced work practices and the interaction of academics and library staff.

From a structural perspective, Giddens underlined the importance of time and space as elements of social systems that exist in instantiations of social practices. These concepts held significant implications in the findings of the presence of time and space in collaborative practice and how time and space linked with the varying levels of collaboration. Other time- and space-related concepts such as social position, social positioning and social identity were
valuable in analysing roles, professional identity, social status and professional divide between academics and library staff.

From a cultural perspective, Giddens’ conceptualisation of cultural values as shared meaning systems in relation to power, norms and knowledgability of participants has led to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics and professional culture and norms of academics and library staff. The lens of structuration theory also enabled the discovery of the interplay of power, organisational structures and professional cultures from both an ontological and an epistemological perspective. As has been noted, power over others forms and is formed by the capabilities of actors in influencing the conduct of other individuals or groups. This concept was valuable in exploring causes and consequences of the structural divide between academics and library staff.

There were three main limitations of Giddens’ theory of structuration. Firstly, his theory placed an overemphasis on ontological philosophies of mutual constitutions of structure and agency made data analysis of structure and action inseparable. Second, his conceptualisation of time and space neglected the relationship of time and space with power. Finally, Giddens placed technology within the category of allocative resources, indicating the commanding role of human over technology, but neglecting the influence of technology on human activities.

From a technological perspective, the theoretical lens of Orlikowski’s duality of technology theory contributed to the elucidation of the interaction of organisational structure, technology and people. The theory laid an important ground for analysing the influences of technology development on collaboration practices, and the organisational conditions and consequences of interaction with technology. Application of the duality of technology theory enabled the researcher to elucidate the impact of structure and technology on participants’ actions from different social, cultural, and organisational contexts.

Although both structuration and the duality of technology theories have been exceptionally useful in guiding this research, they inevitably presented some limitations. Both theories have given little mention to the analysis of personal relationships between individuals and how these relationships contribute to the transformation of structure and social practices. Although the duality of technology of Orlikowski has received less criticism than Giddens’ theory, the changes in her conceptualisation of technology as ‘emergent structures’ in her subsequent research can be questioned for its consistency with the philosophical stance of structuration theory. Findings from this research confirmed the interplay of structure and technology in collaboration practices, but did not support the equation of technology with structure.

\subsection*{8.2 Limitations and future research}

As with any research, there were some limitations to this study. The number of interviews undertaken in the Australian university (29) was greater than in the Vietnamese university (12). However, the Vietnam university as an institution was smaller with nearly 800 fulltime-equivalent staff (FTE) in comparison to more than 8,000 (FTE) staff in the Australian university. This meant that 1.5\% of Vietnamese FTE staff were interviewed compared to
0.36% of Australian FTE staff. In addition, the researcher had a longer work experience at the Vietnamese university, in which she worked as a librarian for three years, and a librarian and teaching staff member for its affiliations for six years. With the Australian university, she had one and a half years of experience working as a library staff member and as a research assistant. Thus, given the smaller size of the Vietnamese university and the longer work experience with the organisation, data and contextual understandings gained from both case studies were balanced in terms of their richness.

This research included case studies from only two countries, Australia and Vietnam. Given the dynamic nature of culture, in which different dimensions can exist across many nations, research conducted in more national cultures would be beneficial for a more extended exploration of the cross cultural dimensions.

The research scope was set within the areas of collaboration in library educational services for teaching, learning and research skills development for students and library research projects between academics and library staff. Future research exploring factors impacting on collaboration in other areas such as data management, bibliometrics, research communication and publishing, e-research infrastructure and development of collaborative educational technology would add further insights.

The usefulness of case study method in in-depth investigations of contextual factors and complex causal relationships in real life contexts was demonstrated in this study. However, to enhance the broader relevance of findings, future research using survey methods to corroborate the key findings of this research in more countries might be desirable.

8.3 Implications of this research for theory

There are four main implications of this research for theory.

8.3.1 A comparative study

There are national implications from this comparative study of collaboration at an Australian university and a Vietnamese university. Finding similarities and differences in the two universities are important for understanding collaboration patterns that exist across the social, cultural and educational contexts, and how factors of particular contexts produce different forms of collaboration. In other words, the research explicates important characteristics of the collaborative relationship in a particular country’s context and contributes to knowledge an in-depth understanding of the influences of social, cultural, professional, technological factors on collaboration in the two countries.

The cross-country comparisons of factors that influenced collaboration has laid the groundwork for a better understanding of how and why collaboration between academics and library staff varied from country to country. The framework has a broad application, being based on an empirical study of collaboration across the educational contexts in one developed country (Australia) and in one developing country (Vietnam). It thus could be utilised for
analysing collaboration between academics and library staff in different social, cultural and educational contexts. Implications from the comparisons are the generalisations of theoretical perspectives concerning factors influencing collaborative relationships in organisations. These concepts could be useful for future research of organisational collaboration in the wider contexts.

The research findings help fill the gap in knowledge through empirical research investigating collaboration between academics and library staff in universities in two countries. If the research was undertaken in universities of the same country, it might not have been possible to discover particular characteristics and factors that are common features in that country. Various new findings have emerged from comparing and contrasting structures and values that are different across the countries (see details of the comparisons in chapter 7). These findings add insights into the current state of collaboration between academics and library staff in different social and structural contexts, and into challenges concerning the traditional social perceptions of the library staff’s roles, constant changes in governance systems and organisational structure, constraints in budget and resources funding and system infrastructures, along with the constant development of technology in collaboration.

This research underscores the importance of the interplay between the social structure and work culture of academics and library staff. While the literature mainly discusses issues of academic culture from the perspective of librarians, this research extended the insights from both academics’ and librarians’ perspectives. Furthermore, the elucidation and comparison of the differences of these two professional cultures has given useful explanations for particular patterns on collaboration.

In addition to the findings of the main factors influencing collaboration, the research has also contributed new findings regarding the impact of personal factors upon participants’ intentions, involvement and contributions to collaboration. This area has been paid little attention in the literature of collaboration.

### 8.3.2 A theoretical framework of collaboration

This research contributes a theoretical framework of collaboration that can provide a richer understanding of the interaction of structural, social, cultural, organisational, technological, professional and personal factors, and how these elements influence collaboration practices between academics and library staff (see Figure 7-3 (repeated below)).

The framework acknowledges the presence and influences of multi-dimensional features in collaboration. It considers the influence of structure/agency interactions at both the institutional level but also the personal level. It is comprised of three dimensions, i.e., (i) the governance structure, (ii) socio-cultural dynamics, and (iii) personal dimensions. Each dimension consists of inter-related sub-factors that can be utilised in the analysis of the complexity of collaboration concepts and factors that influence collaboration practices.
The framework was constructed based on comparison of all inter-related sub-factors that influenced collaboration in the Australian and Vietnamese universities (see details in chapter 7). Initially, comparisons of the influence of governance structure on collaboration (see Table 7-1) provided in-depth insights of the similarities and differences of three interrelated factors: organisational structure, the roles of collaborators, and supporting resources for collaboration. Secondly, comparisons of the interplay of structure and technology (see Table 7-2) highlighted constitutive interactions between structure and technology, and how these elements influenced and have been influenced by collaboration practices. The third comparison of socio-cultural dynamics showed how perceptions of power asymmetry were created and reinforced (see Table 7-3). The final dimensions for comparison, personal features (i.e., personality, personal relationship, personal perception and trust), facilitated an understanding of participants’ decisions to become involved in a collaborative relationship, as well as their level of commitment throughout the collaboration process (see Table 7-4).

The framework can be used to explain the dynamic interplay of an organisation’s governance structure with its socio-cultural systems and individual values, and how these systems shape and are shaped by actions of people in collaboration practices. The framework can be used to analyse particular relationships which offer insights for understanding collaboration in situated contexts. For example, in studying a collaboration practice by an organisation’s teams or members, it is important to articulate factors concerning:
Chapter 8 - Conclusions and implications

- the organisation’s governance system including the organisational structure and management, roles and responsibilities, organisational resources, communication and methods of communication, and technology and systems;
- the social and cultural institutions including power distribution, social and cultural norms, and time and space as in physical and digital contexts and as organisational and individual resources; and
- individual characteristics including trust, personal perceptions, relationships and personality of the organisational members.

Most importantly, each factor needs to be studied in situated dynamics and in relation to the other factors.

The framework contributes to future research into organisational collaboration by providing an overall picture of the interrelationship of key dimensions of collaboration, and how these structures enable and constrain the collaborative interaction of participants, as well as how participants’ actions change the systems via their interactions.

8.3.3 Enriching the interpretation of structuration theory and the duality of technology theory

The theory of structuration and the duality of technology theory have been utilised in library and information science research, particularly in studying information seeking and information behaviour. This research documents the applicability and the shortcomings of both theories for studying collaboration in different social, organisational, cultural and educational contexts.

First, the research has demonstrated strategies for making sense of and analysing data using Giddens’ central concepts of enabling/constraining structure in studying collaboration via the use of the two levels of analysis i.e., institution and agency. These strategies of analysis contribute to the resolution of empirical challenges in using structuration theory, particularly its overemphasis on ontology. Future research would benefit from analysing examples provided throughout the findings of the Australian and Vietnamese universities concerning the dynamic changes in organisational structure and social practices, the influences of these changes, and the outcomes and consequences of interactions between structure and people in various social contexts.

Second, it has extended the observation of Walsham (2002) and Myers and Avison (2002) about the usefulness of Giddens’ theory in studying organisational culture by showing the interaction of social structure with organisational and professional culture. Also, Giddens’ concepts of social power relationships have been enriched by examples illustrating the interplay of an organisation’s governance structure, work culture and professional boundary between academics and librarians. This application is recommended for research studying collaborative relationships between partners in an organisation with different professional backgrounds.
Third, it enriches the interpretation of time and space by illustrating their presence in collaboration, and how these elements relate to organisational changes and the social identity of participants in the relationship. Further, it conceptualises the relationship between power, on the one hand, and time and space, on the other, in which the latter serve as resources that can be utilised or manipulated by participants. This interpretation could assist research into organisational collaboration, since the study of time and space should not be limited to collaboration contexts and structural changes, but should also be used for understanding the implications of power domination among groups of collaborators.

Fourth, it enhances the application of the duality of technology theory in studying the interplay of social structures, technology and people in different organisational forms, as suggested by Orlikowski (1992a). Since applications of her theory have mostly been undertaken in the analysis of organisations’ information systems, this research enriched the application of her conceptualisations of technology from the perspective of users in the Australian and Vietnamese university contexts. Findings from both universities illustrated the interplay of social structures, technology and associated socio-cultural factors in collaborative practices as well as challenging circumstances that organisations and individuals commonly faced when working with technology. The empirical application of Orlikowski’s theory in this doctoral study would be beneficial to research investigating the use of technology for collaboration in cross-cultural organisations.

Lastly, this research contributed to structuration theory and the duality of technology theory a further reflection concerning personal dimensions including personality, trust, personal relationship and personal perception, in the production and reproduction of structure and social practices (see details in section 7.6). These personally constructed dimensions have important implications for studying perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of organisational members in collaboration, since these features interact with social structures, governance systems, technology and cultural norms that in turn enable or constrain social interactions.

**8.3.4 Case study research design**

This research confirmed the relevance of qualitative research in informing investigation into the nature of the relationship between academics and library staff and the contextual factors that influence their collaborative relationships in different university contexts. The chosen methodology enabled the collection of qualitative data though interviews, observations, texts, visual demonstration and personal reflections to interpret how a collaborative relationship as a social reality is constructed and how knowledge is created through interactions of the researcher and respondents.

The case study research design (see details in chapter 4) could be beneficial to researchers seeking to evaluate the case study research process and its connection with theory development. Strengths of the research design lay in the strategic design of the research stages including the review of the research topic and relevant concepts, the development of solid theoretical perspectives, and the utilisation of robust data collection and data analysis techniques. These strategies have been valuable in yielding significant findings regarding the
particularity and complexity of collaboration and the impact of social, cultural and technological factors on the relationship between academics and library staff. The research design of this thesis (Figure 1-1) is now being used as an example of case study research design for research students studying a Research Methodology unit in the Faculty of Information Technology at Monash University.

8.4 Implications for practice

This section provides practical implications for the Australian and Vietnamese universities concerning eight important features that influence the practice and outcomes of collaboration, i.e., governance system of the university, collaborative structure, contexts for collaboration, power asymmetries, differences in work cultures, influence of technology, time and space, and individual characteristics. It then explains implications for the practice of collaboration in the wider university context.

8.4.1 Recommendations for the Australian university

Recommendations are provided dimension by dimension for the Australian university, as below:

i. Governance structure

- The role of committee structures and changes would be enhanced if they are clearly communicated to committee members and related bodies. Also, strategies and an action plan to turn committees’ decisions into practice are desirable.
- Effective communication strategies to inform the university communities of structural changes and the impact of these changes are needed.
- It is necessary to develop intersecting work structures, shared missions or tasks between faculties and the library to enable more structured collaborative activities on a frequent basis.
- Investigation is desirable into whether or not improving/changing the job classification system for librarians would help minimise the divide between academics and professional staff.

ii. Collaborative structure

- It would be useful to develop a more flexible library work practice that could support liaison library staff who work with multiple faculties and in multiple campuses. A flatter organisational structure for these staff would help shorten reporting lines, and facilitate communication about liaison for staff working across embedded teams and campuses.
- Innovative changes in restructuring the faculty governance system are needed for an effective change in the learning environment. In addition, it is suggested that faculties assign a role of library coordinating staff to work with library liaison team members.
- Development of two-level collaboration approaches: a top-down structure and a bottom-up personal relationship is advised to achieve successful university wide collaboration.
- The university, faculties and the library should consider balancing development strategies for both teaching and research activities since such strategies would be beneficial to both students and staff.

- A clear role structure and scope of practices for academic skills advisers and liaison librarians are important to minimise overlapping roles or work practices between the two groups. In addition, open discussion of roles or peer learning workshops would help enhance understanding of each other’s roles, facilitate relationship building and help them work together to contribute to the common goals of the (merged) library.

iii. **Contexts for collaboration**

- Faculties and the library need to work together to develop a collaborative structure that matches faculties’ teaching and research programs and is relevant to students’ information and research skills levels.

- The usefulness of Research Skills Development framework for teaching and assessment practices, as well as in improving research skills for students would be enhanced if it was widely communicated. The university, faculties and the library are expected to work together to develop a relevant structure including procedures, guidelines and a resourcing framework to support the standard application and implementation of this framework.

- More structured and social activities between academics and library staff could be needed to facilitate their communication and relationship building.

iv. **Impact of power asymmetry**

- The university should consider developing strategies to minimise the negative impacts of hierarchical and bureaucratic structures on collaboration (e.g., allowing library liaison staff to have flexible working conditions so that they can be more dynamic partners with academics).

- Actions are needed to change preconceptions about librarianship and communicate librarians’ emerging roles in teaching and research to the wider academic communities.

- Professional development and capacity building for librarians in teaching, research, utilising educational and research support technologies are necessary strategies to narrow the knowledge gaps and professional divide between academics and librarians. This could also help librarians feel more confident about working in academia.

- Granting academic status to appropriate library job roles could help in promoting the position of librarians while improving academics’ perception.

v. **Impacts of differences in work cultures**

- The university, faculties and the library should work together to develop a harmonious multi-professional culture in which understanding and respect for differences of work culture should be encouraged and reinforced through communication channels, social activities, professional networking and cultural events.
vi. **Influences of technology**

- It is important to enhance the awareness among academics of the current library staff, their skills and expertise, and their potential roles in the online learning environment. For example:
  - enabling direct interpersonal contact by having formal involvement of library staff in faculty academic meetings related to course design, curriculum development, marking guide and rubric assessment, and the implementation of teaching and learning technologies; and
  - creatively using available technologies to identify opportunities for collaboration and potential collaborators, and in supporting collaborative partnerships.

- The university could explore integrating the library management system with the learning management system. At the same time, the library needs to seek automatic authorised access to the learning management system for library staff, but also ways to manage the resultant online workload on library staff.

- Greater coordination of the isolated systems towards seamless integration of the library management and learning management system is critical.

vii. **Influences of time and space**

- It is important that the university builds up a collaborative work environment that contains informal and formal collaborative workspace for both academics and library staff.

- The university should consider developing a resource structure to support academics to collaborate.

- Library staff in a liaison role would benefit from having a higher level of autonomy in utilising their time and work space. By the same token, sessional and casual academics should be paid for the hours they spend collaborating with library staff.

viii. **Influences of time and space**

- It is important that the university builds up a collaborative work environment that contains informal and formal collaborative workspace for both academics and library staff.

- The university should consider developing a resource structure to support academics to collaborate.

- Library staff in a liaison role would benefit from having a higher level of autonomy in utilising their time and work space. By the same token, sessional and casual academics should be paid for the hours they spend collaborating with library staff.

### 8.4.2 Recommendations for the Vietnamese university

Recommendations are provided dimension by dimension for the Vietnamese university.
Chapter 8 - Conclusions and implications

i. **Governance structure:**
   - A flatter organisational structure with representative faculty staff taking coordinating roles would help increase communication and relationships between academics and library staff.
   - Improving the level of autonomy for both faculties and the library could benefit the whole university in terms of staff responsibilities, contribution and organisational dynamism. Also, assigning senior librarians to the academic and university committees would help the library have an equal footing with faculties.
   - Development of a two level collaboration approach (top-down structure and bottom up personal relationship) would be useful for a successful university wide collaboration.
   - Income for library staff can be enhanced by increasing their involvement in teaching information literacy in a wider university scale, particularly in international collaborative education programs.

ii. **Collaborative structure**
   - Intersecting work structures, and shared missions or tasks between faculties and the library would enable more structured collaborative activities on a frequent basis.
   - The university, faculties and the library should consider balancing development strategies for both teaching and research activities since they would be beneficial to students and staff.
   - On-going communication of structural changes is important to make the university communities informed and help recognise the emerging role of library staff.

iii. **Contexts for collaboration**
   - The university should consider balancing the areas of collaboration to support the university goals. Application of the Research Skills Development framework to teaching and in improving research skills for students would be useful, but it would be essential to adapt the framework to suit the educational context and research skills levels of students and academics.

iv. **Impact of power asymmetry**
   - Increasing the awareness of the changing roles of librarians and academic library via Orientation weeks and collaborative initiatives in teaching and research would help change such longstanding perceptions.
   - The library should consider developing strategies to build trust through their professionalism, and confidence in daily practice and through lines of communication with senior management. It is also proposed that that the university leaders give higher autonomy in decision-making to librarians.
   - Academics valued librarians’ professional expertise in digital libraries, digital literacy skills and technology skills, thus building capacity for librarians in such areas would potentially help reduce professional barriers with academics. In addition, providing
staff development opportunities in teaching and doing research is necessary to enhance qualifications for librarians to work in academia.

v. **Impact of differences in work cultures**
   - The university should consider developing strategies to create a dynamic work environment in order to narrow the power distance between the leaders and subordinates as well as reducing the over-dependence of staff members on the leaders’ work styles.
   - The university, faculties and the library need to work together to develop a harmonious multi-professional culture in which understanding and respect for differences of work culture would be encouraged and reinforced through communication channels, social activities, professional networking and cultural events.

vi. **Influences of technology**
   - Strategic investments in upgrading technology and system infrastructure are necessary to increase the acceptance of technology and confidence of users in using technology in daily practices.
   - It is important to enhance the awareness among academics of the current library staff, their skills and expertise, and their potential roles in the online learning environment.
   - Utilisation of social technologies in relationship building should be taken in consideration with a manageable workload for staff who take an extra role in using social technologies for organisation marketing and promotion purposes. Moreover, optimal privacy protection resolution for the use of social technologies for both personal and professional purposes should be sought out (see details in section 6.6.2).

vii. **Influences of time and space**
   - The university, library and faculties should consider developing a resource framework to support both academics and librarians so they have sufficient time for collaboration.
   - Library staff in a liaison role need higher levels of autonomy in utilising their time and work space. By the same token, sessional/casual academics should be paid for the hours they collaborated with library staff.
   - It is important that the university builds up a collaborative work environment that contains informal and formal collaborative work space for academics and library staff. Collaborative strategies to work in a blended learning environment are essential.

viii. **Influences of individual characteristics**
   - Building collegial relationships is necessary to achieve a successful and sustainable collaboration. Designing social spaces to enhance interaction between academics and library staff could facilitate relationship building.
   - Strategies to reduce the power gaps between academics and librarians such as raising librarians’ voice in the academic community by assigning senior librarians to committees or supporting their role in teaching and research, and improving communication between the two groups are necessary.
8.4.3 Implications for practice in the wider university context

Effective collaborative partnerships between library staff and academics have the following characteristics:

- They take time to achieve, as they involve the development of a personal relationship of mutual understanding and trust that must be nurtured through on-going communication ‘to keep the flame alive’.
- They are characterised by respect for each other’s knowledge, skills and expertise, recognising the other profession as an equal partner, with different but complementary skills.
- They are assisted by physical co-location and face-to-face interaction, especially in the early stages of the relationship; electronic linkages facilitate on-going communication in an established relationship.
- They highlight the importance of the intersecting work structures, shared missions or tasks and resource frameworks between faculties the library would enable more structured collaborative activities on a frequent basis.
- They recognise and address power asymmetries between professional groups that are associated with distinct professional traditions, scope of practice, roles and cultures, shifting access to resources and rules and structures that enable or constrain action.
- They involve the selection of competent individuals who have well developed interpersonal skills and personalities that mesh well together, and a choice of a subset of subjects or curriculum areas with the greatest potential for successful outcomes.
- They depend on responsiveness, flexibility, cycles of feedback on key performance indicators, and a focus on continuous improvement of current practice.
- They focus on exploring together other areas of activity that can add value to the educational or research experience, e.g. supporting the implementation of collaborative online work platforms or educational frameworks, research support services in data management, bibliometrics, and scholarly publishing.

8.4.4 Implications for LIS education

The paradigm shift of librarians’ professional role from working in collection management to focusing on collaborative teaching and research in the academia necessitates changes and enhancements in LIS education programs. LIS educators may need to:

- place a stronger focus on practice of teaching in areas of information literacy, digital literacy, communication skills, and research skills development, (particularly in the case of Vietnamese universities);
- provide instruction in teaching methodology, curriculum design, rubrics development and assessment frameworks;
- enhance capacity for library students in educational communications through presentations or discussions in topics related to teaching and research practices
- enhance capacity for library students in using educational technologies in classroom teaching, designing course materials and digital instructional programs;
- enhance capacity for library students in research by providing instruction or supervision in research methodology, research projects, research communication and
Chapter 8 - Conclusions and implications

publishing and research infrastructures including digital repositories and data management, bibliometrics, and research analytics.

8.5 Final reflection

As a librarian, I have been inspired to undertake this research in order to explore factors that influence collaboration between academics and library staff. Contributions of this research, from a theoretical perspective, centre on the conceptualisations of the key dimensions of collaborative relationships, which will also prove useful for future research into organisational collaboration, particularly in universities. From a practical perspective, recommendations for library collaboration can contribute to the improvement of current collaboration practices and the sustainable development of academic libraries in universities.

In undertaking this research, I have been most surprised by the findings concerning: firstly, the interplay of national culture, organisational culture and professional culture in collaboration, because the role of the first two were commonly discussed independently rather than along with the third; secondly, the complexity of collaboration and how important organisational support and resources can be in making collaboration widespread in the university; and finally, the crucial place of personal relationships in initiating and cultivating collaboration.

I have also gained great experience and knowledge by undertaking this research as a comparative study. It enabled me to develop a better understanding of the social, cultural, and educational systems in Australia and Vietnam, and how these influenced collaboration in each country. The similarity of constraints upon collaboration within the universities of these developed and developing countries was striking, albeit to different degrees and in varied contexts. The shared experiences and lessons learned from collaboration practices amongst participants of this research, therefore, can be valuable not only for library staff at both universities, but also within wider university contexts.

My final thought concerns other important outcomes arising from undertaking a PhD: I have experienced and enjoyed continuous learning, overcoming personal challenges, building relationships, and working in collaboration.
References


Auckland, M. (2012). Re-skilling for research: An investigation into the role and skills of subject and liaison librarians required to effectively support the evolving information needs of researchers. London: Research Libraries UK.


Bury, S. (2011). Faculty attitudes, perceptions and experiences of information literacy: A study across multiple disciplines at York University, Canada. *Journal of Information Literacy, 5*(1), 45-64.


References


References


Appendix 1 Interview schedule for the Australian university’s participants

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<th>No</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>11 am Thursday July 25th 2013</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Course Administrator - A3 ✓</td>
<td>2pm Friday 16 August 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
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</tr>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Academic - A14 ✓</td>
<td>2pm Monday 16 September 2013</td>
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<td>15.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 Interview questions for the Australian university’s participants

For Academic staff:

1. Could you please describe your role in the faculty? Can you please speak about your working relationship with library staff?
2. If you have been working with the library staff, can you please give me an example of a collaborative activity or initiative that you have been involved with?
3. What would be your expectation in working collaboratively with library staff?
4. How does the university structure influence your collaboration practice?
5. Have you heard about RSD, the Research skills development framework? If you have been using RSD, can you tell me your experiences in working with library staff using this framework?
6. What kind of technology are you using to work and for collaboration with library staff? Are there any issues related to information technology that needed to be addressed to enable the collaboration activities?
7. Are there differences in culture between the academics and library staff? How could these differences influence collaboration with library staff?
8. What do you think about the professional boundary between academics and library professional staff? What do you think about the role of library staff in working with the curriculum/rubric? Do you think library staff need to learn more about your subject and need to build the teaching skills to be able to collaborate more effectively?
9. In what way do you think collaboration between academics and librarians could achieve a better outcome?
10. In summary, what are the important elements that you find necessary in building good relationships with library staff?

For Library staff:

1. Could you please describe your role in the library? Can you please speak about your collaborative relationship with academic staff?
2. Can you please give me a typical example of a collaborative activity or initiative that you have been involved with? How could you manage your collaboration with academic staff in different faculties and campuses?
3. How does the university structure influence your collaboration practice?
4. If you have been working across the campuses, have you found any similarities and differences of collaboration in those workplaces?
5. Have you heard about the Research Skills Development framework (RSD)? If you have been using RSD, can you tell me your experiences in working with academic staff using this framework?
6. What kind of technology are you using to work with academic staff? Are there any issues related to information technology that needed to be addressed to enable the collaboration activities?

7. Are there differences in culture between the academics and library staff? How could these differences influence your collaboration with academic staff?

8. What do you think about the professional boundary? What do you think about the role of library staff in working with the curriculum/subject area? Do you think library staff need to learn more about the subject of the discipline and need to build the teaching skills to be able to collaborate more effectively?

9. In what way do you think collaboration between academics and librarians could achieve a better outcome?

10. In summary, what are the important elements that you find necessary in building good relationships with library staff?
Appendix 3 Topics for the focus group interview at the Australian university

**Aims:** To discuss the library experiences, opinions, concerns, solutions and future plans in working collaboratively with academics. These shared discussions are based on the topics of interest with questions that have been raised in the one-to-one interviews.

**Date:** 9.45 am, 1 October 2013

**Venue:** Library

**Participants:** 1 senior library staff, 2 academic skills advisers, 1 liaison librarian

**Topics for discussion:**

1. Researcher’s introduction to the research project, objectives, stages, proposed outcomes
2. Introduction the researcher’s role
3. Participants’ introduction of themselves and their roles in the library.
4. Participants jointly talk about:
   - Their collaborative relationship with academic staff and key collaboration activities
   - Their team collaboration structure and their expectations in working collaboratively with academic staff.
   - Possible influence of the design and location of your library in the faculty’s building on collaboration practices and outcome.
   - Influences of the university structure on their collaboration practice? (sub-topic: the system, roles, strategies, norms, rules, frameworks, expectation, demands, time and distance, leadership and management, the merger etc.).
   - Influences of technology on collaboration with academic staff.
   - Differences in culture between the academics and library staff and the influence on collaboration.
   - Issues related to the professional boundary between academics and librarians.
   - The role of library staff in working with the curriculum/rubric (subjects of disciplines, teaching skills etc.).
   - Recommendations for enhancing collaboration between academics and librarians.
   - Summary of the most important elements in building good relationships with academic staff.
Appendix 4 Checklist for Observations at the Australian university

**Observation 1:** Observing a library training of information literacy and academic skills for students who have just enrolled in a postgraduate program.

**Date:** 9 August 2013

**Venue:** Library training room

**Participants:** 1 liaison librarian, 1 academic skills adviser (and 28 post graduate students)

**Recording methods:** Paper based recording

**Checklist:**

1. Roles of the liaison librarian and the academic skills adviser in teaching the class
2. Communication between the liaison librarian and the academic skills advisers in teaching the class
3. Interaction between the liaison librarian and the academic skills adviser in teaching the class
4. Particular characteristics/behaviours/attitudes of the liaison librarian and the academic skills adviser
5. Differences in working culture between the liaison librarian and the academic skills adviser when they work together

**Observation 2:** Observing a meeting between academic staff and library staff to prepare for a training session in Group work skills for students of a course.

**Date:** 11.30 am 2 October 2013

**Venue:** Faculty meeting room

**Participants:** 1 lecturer, 2 tutors and 1 academic skills adviser

**Recording methods:** Audio-recording and Paper based recording

**Checklist:**

1. Roles of each participant and their expectation toward their partners.
2. Communication between academic staff and the academic skills adviser.
3. Interaction between the liaison librarian and the academic skills adviser.
4. Particular characteristics/behaviours/attitudes of participants toward their partners.
5. Differences in working culture between academic staff and the academic skills adviser.
Appendix 5 List of organisational documents

1. The Australian University
   - University websites –
   - Library organisational chart – collaboration team structure
   - Faculties’ websites
   - Library websites -
   - Library annual reports
   - Library committee meeting minutes
   - Information Literacy syllabus
   - Application of Research Skills Development framework
   - Unit assessment tasks
   - Rubrics of two units

2. The Vietnamese university
   - University organisational chart
   - Faculties’ websites
   - Library websites
   - Library annual reports
   - Library meeting minutes
   - University quality assurance report
   - IL programs and syllabus
## Appendix 6 Interview schedule for the Vietnamese university’s participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4 pm Monday 31 March 2014</td>
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<td>2pm Monday 7 April 2014</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Librarian—V5✓</td>
<td>10.30 am 18 December 2014 (workshop)</td>
</tr>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Librarian—V6✓</td>
<td>10.30 am 18 December 2014 (workshop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
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<td>11 am Monday 6 May 2014</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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<td>2 pm Tuesday 10 December 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Senior library staff—V9✓</td>
<td>10 am Monday 16 December 2014 (interview) 10.30 am 18 December 2014 (workshop)</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
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<td>25.</td>
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Appendix 7 Interview questions for the Vietnamese university’s participants

For Academic staff:

1. Could you please describe your role in the faculty? Can you please speak about your working relationship with library staff?
2. If you have been working with the library staff, can you please give me an example of a collaborative activity or initiative that you have been involved with?
3. What would be your expectations of working collaboratively with library staff?
4. How does the university structure influence your collaboration practice?
5. Are there any guidelines or work practice standards that support you to work with library staff? If yes, can you tell me your experiences in working with library staff them?
6. What kind of technology are you using to work and for collaboration with library staff? Are there any issues related to information technology that needed to be addressed to enable the collaboration activities?
7. Are there differences in culture between the academics and library staff? How could these differences influence collaboration with library staff?
8. What do you think about the professional boundary between academics and library professional staff? What do you think about the role of library staff in working with the curriculum/rubric? Do you think library staff need to learn more about your subject and need to build the teaching skills to be able to collaborate more effectively?
9. In what way do you think collaboration between academics and librarians could achieve a better outcome?
10. In summary, what are the important elements that you find necessary in building good relationships with library staff?

For Library staff:

1. Could you please describe your role in the library? Can you please speak about your collaborative relationship with academic staff?
2. Can you please give me a typical example of a collaborative activity/initiative that you have been involved with? How could you manage your collaboration with academic staff in different faculties/campuses?
3. How does the university structure influence your collaboration practice?
4. If you have been working across the campuses, have you found any similarities and differences of collaboration in those workplaces?
5. Are there any guidelines or work practice standards that support you to work with library staff? If yes, can you tell me your experiences in working with library staff them?
6. What kind of technology are you using to work with academic staff? Are there any issues related to information technology that needed to be addressed to enable the collaboration activities?

7. Are there differences in culture between the academics and library staff? How could these differences influence your collaboration with academic staff?

8. What do you think about the professional boundary? What do you think about the role of library staff in working with the curriculum/subject area? Do you think library staff need to learn more about the subject of the discipline and need to build the teaching skills to be able to collaborate more effectively?

9. In what way do you think collaboration between academics and librarians could achieve a better outcome?

10. In summary, what are the important elements that you find necessary in building good relationships with library staff?
Appendix 8 The Vietnamese university workshop program

**Aims:** To gain insights into the collaboration issues in Vietnamese contexts

**Workshop date:** 10.30 am Wednesday 18 December 2014

**Venue:** Faculty’s building

**Participants:** 10 academics, 1 senior academics, 2 library staff and 1 senior library staff

**Workshop program:**

1. Introduce the research project, objectives, stages, proposed outcomes
2. Introduce the researcher’s role
3. Researcher’s presentation of preliminary findings in Australia
4. Discussion of the Australian findings
5. Discussion of the Vietnam’s collaboration contexts and challenges
6. Possibility of applying the Research Skills development framework in Vietnam: challenges and opportunities
7. Current stages of integrating information literacy skills training into the curriculum and future work
8. Implications for collaboration in Vietnam
## Appendix 9 Document Analysis Template

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<tr>
<td>Author of document</td>
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### Appendix 10  Project timeline

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Appendix 11  Research Skills Development Framework (RSD)

Research Skills Development Framework
A conceptual framework for the explicit, coherent, incremental and cyclical development of the skills associated with researching, problem solving and critical thinking

Level 1 (Prescribed Research)
Highly structured directions and modeling from educator or student research

Level 2 (Bounded Research)
Boundaries set by and limited directions from educator and student research

Level 3 (Scaffolded Research)
Scaffolds placed by educator and student independent research

Level 4 (Student Initiated Research)
Students initiate the research and follow or guided by the educator

Level 5 (Open Research)
Students research within self-determined guidelines that are in accord with discipline or context

a. Conduct & Describe
Respond to questions arising from a broad issue or open-ended research topic

b. Find & Generate
Find and generate relevant information/data using appropriate methodology

c. Evaluate & Reflect
Evaluate and reflect on the progress of the research process using appropriate criteria

d. Organize & Manage
Organize information and data in useful patterns and themes, and manage these research processes

e. Analyze & Synthesize
Analyze and synthesize existing knowledge in prescribed and prescribed fields in order to identify new knowledge and understandings

f. Communicate & Apply Visually
Use maps, pictures, diagrams, and other visual representations to communicate research findings and understanding

Level 6 (Advanced Research)
Advanced research with self-determined guidelines that are in accord with discipline or context

What characterizes the differences between "teach" and "research"? When teaching and when doing research, students need to be engaged in their learning process and be encouraged to think critically, creatively, and independently.

Level 7 (Expert Research)
Expert research with self-determined guidelines that are in accord with discipline or context

www.rsd.edu.au